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Jan. 24, 2003, 12:47AM

Enron seeking OK for \$29 million in bonuses

By **ERIC BERGER**

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It's bonus time at Enron again.

After more than 400 days in bankruptcy, the company is seeking court permission for a new round of bonuses totaling \$29 million, spread among about 900 employees.

This round follows a \$140 million retention plan approved last April and \$105 million in bonuses paid at the time Enron filed for bankruptcy.

Because part of the \$140 million package expires at the end of February, Enron officials say the company must assure that certain employees, many of whom are liquidating the very businesses that employ them, stay on to complete the job.

When Enron proposed the \$140 million retention plan to the court last spring, its attrition rate was so high that if left unchecked, 87 percent of its employees would have left within a year, the company said.

Since that plan was approved, the company went from losing an average of 34 employees a week to losing nine per week.

"We want to have continuity going forward, and there's considerable uncertainty with the first plan ending," Enron spokeswoman Karen Denne said.

Some company creditors are asking why another round of bonuses is now needed when most, if not all, of Enron's remaining assets will be auctioned within a few months, long before the February 2004 date to which the new retention plan binds workers.

"Enron has been a feast for professionals and insiders, but so far it has done nothing but have a reduced promise for any meaningful return for outside creditors," said David Bennett, a lawyer with Thompson & Knight, which represents creditors of Enron North America.

Bennett said the company has done nothing in its bankruptcy to shed its reputation for corporate excess, and the new request is suspect as a result.

Already Enron has shattered records for the most money spent on bankruptcy lawyers and accountants, racking up considerably more than \$300 million to date, and is spending at a rate that will take those costs above half a billion dollars.

Payouts to the company's tens of thousands of creditors likely remain at least a year off.

Court papers Enron filed in support of its request say it cannot do without its present employees because they alone have the expertise to liquidate the company's trading books, respond to 20 investigations and resolve bankruptcy claims.

"These individuals possess unique knowledge, skills and experience, as well as customer and supplier relationships, vital to the business enterprise, all of which are in many cases impractical or impossible to replicate," wrote Enron's chief bankruptcy lawyer, Martin Bienenstock.

Enron did not provide information about how the \$29 million in bonuses will be split up among the 900 employees. It averages to about \$32,000 per worker.

The company also did not say who received money from the last round of bonuses or how much of that amount is left. The \$140 million plan included \$40 million in retention payments for 1,285 employees, up to \$90 million in incentive bonuses for employees who helped sell Enron assets and manage contracts to their conclusion, and \$7 million in severance for about 842 employees.

Bennett said Enron should say how much of the bonus money from all parts of the \$140 million plan remains before asking for more cash.

Enron's request for additional bonus money is scheduled to be heard in bankruptcy court Feb. 6.

Denne said the company has the support of its creditors committee, made up of the largest unsecured creditors. Typically Enron's requests that are supported by the committee have been approved by Judge Arthur Gonzalez.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:49AM

U.S. won't have to strike Iraq alone, officials say

White House dismisses rift with allies

By **TODD S. PURDUM**

New York Times

WASHINGTON -- Despite the deepest diplomatic rift in decades with some major European allies, a parade of top Bush administration officials closed ranks Thursday and demanded in closely parallel speeches and statements that Saddam Hussein disarm Iraq. They insisted that the United States would not have to act alone if war should be needed to force him.

"I don't think we'll have to worry about going it alone," Secretary of State Colin Powell said at a meeting here with Foreign Secretary Jack Straw of Britain, Washington's most stalwart ally, brushing aside renewed opposition to war from France and Germany.

As resistance to military action appeared to harden among members of the U.N. Security Council, a senior administration official acknowledged that it did not now have the votes to force a second resolution explicitly authorizing an attack, and Powell said it was "an open question" whether to seek one.

The top administration officials -- hawks and former doves alike -- argued that it was up to Iraq to turn over its weapons to U.N. inspectors and not the job of the inspectors to ferret them out or find a "smoking gun." They warned that Saddam was balking and that time was running out.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, said, "We know from multiple sources that Saddam has ordered that any scientist who cooperates" in interviews with weapons inspectors "will be killed, as well as their families."

A top Iraqi official said Thursday that scientists had refused to be interviewed, rejecting a central U.N. demand.

Wolfowitz said Saddam was making no serious effort to disarm, unlike regimes in South Africa, the Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which gave up their nuclear weapons in the 1990s in response to international pressure.

No sooner had he spoken than Hans Blix, the chief U.N. weapons inspector, also cited South Africa in

unflattering contrast to Iraq, hinting at the thrust of the report on Iraqi compliance that he is to deliver next week.

It was another day of sharp oratory and continued military buildup in the Persian Gulf region, as Australia announced that it was dispatching an unspecified number of troops, including a transport ship, Special Forces and an air reconnaissance team in advance of possible deployment of fighter planes.

In a speech on foreign policy at Georgetown University, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., who is running for president, earned loud applause when he sharply criticized the Bush administration for failing to win broader international support for possible military action.

"I say to the president, show respect for the process of international diplomacy because it is not only right, it can make America stronger," Kerry said. "Mr. President, do not rush to war."

But White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said, "The president is confident that Europe will heed the call," and he drew a distinction between France and Germany and other nations from Eastern Europe to Spain, Italy, Australia and Britain.

He added that it would be "entirely possible for good friends to stay on the sidelines," and said Bush was "respectful" of France and Germany's posture.

French and German leaders reacted sharply to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's blunt dismissal of them on Wednesday as part of "old Europe" and as "problems" in handling the crisis over Iraq. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said, "Our position is not a problem, it is a constructive contribution."

In fact, the French and German opposition appeared to be causing considerable problems for Bush with some veto-holding members of the Security Council, including China and Russia.

In a telephone call, Russian President Vladimir Putin told Bush that next week's scheduled report from U.N. arms inspectors should provide the "main criteria" in deciding what to do next.

On Capitol Hill, where he and Powell held a closed-door session in the Senate on the Iraq situation, Rumsfeld told reporters that his remarks would not have any effect on European-American relations, and added: "At my age, old is a term of endearment."

His senior aides said Rumsfeld's remarks were not premeditated, but came in response to a reporter's broad assertion that "a lot of Europeans" gave the benefit of the doubt to Iraq.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher sought to soften Rumsfeld's remarks, saying the United States had no plans to break its alliances.

"These are the people that we do so many things with every day -- fighting terrorism, cooperating in

NATO, economic cooperation, air traffic, everything under the sun. We have differences on some issues sometimes, but these are our allies and we're not pulling back from them, nor they from us," he said.

Jan. 24, 2003, 2:09AM

Conroe photographer abducted in Colombia

By **MICHAEL HEDGES** and **RACHEL GRAVES**

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WASHINGTON -- A Conroe man working as a news photographer was one of two journalists abducted by guerrillas in a violent region of northeastern Colombia, officials said Thursday.

Scott Dalton and Ruth Morris, a British reporter, were on assignment for the Los Angeles Times when they were detained Wednesday by the National Liberation Army, or ELN by its Spanish acronym, the group said in a statement released Thursday.

"In due time, they will be freed, when the political and military conditions permit," said a transcript of the statement.

The Times said Dalton and Morris were working on a story for the newspaper. "The situation is very fluid, and our primary concern is for Ruth and Scott's safety," said a Times spokeswoman.

The abductions come as the United States is increasing its involvement in the decades-old struggle between the Colombian government and guerrilla groups. Earlier this month, dozens of U.S. Green Berets arrived in Arauca state, one of the South American nation's most violent regions, to begin training Colombian troops.

The Colombian government is seeking to upgrade security for an oil pipeline in Arauca frequently targeted by the ELN, a left-wing group labeled by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization.

Dalton and Morris were intercepted Tuesday at a rebel roadblock in Arauca. The journalists were led away from their taxi with hoods on their heads but had been told they were being taken for an encounter with a rebel commander, their driver, Madiel Ariza, told The Associated Press.

Ariza said the rebels told him to leave their encampment Wednesday and that the ELN would turn Dalton and Morris over to the Red Cross within a day or two. The ELN's statement, however, indicates the freelance journalists are being held.

"You must take into account that Arauca state has been declared a war zone by the American government and the Colombian state," the ELN statement said. "For that reason, the National Liberation Army is on a war footing ... in the defense of the dignity of all the people of eastern Colombia."

The U.S. government confirmed the abduction late Thursday.

"The ELN has announced it has taken two persons hostage," said Kelly Shannon, a spokeswoman for the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs in Washington. "Without their permission in the form of a Privacy Act waiver, I am not permitted to provide information on individual American citizens."

The claim by the ELN was considered credible, a State Department official said. It came after a period of several hours during which U.S. Embassy officials in Bogota struggled to clear up conflicting reports -- some said the two had been kidnapped, others said they willingly had gone with the ELN as part of an assignment.

U.S. military officials have not been asked to get involved, said Col. David McWilliams of the U.S. Southern Command in Florida. "We are aware of the reports, but at this time it is not a military issue," he said.

U.S. Embassy officials in Bogota did not return a call for information Thursday.

Meanwhile, three other foreign journalists, including at least one American, who were reported missing Sunday in Panama were turned over to church officials Thursday, according to a CMI Television report.

Friends of Dalton and Morris described both as committed journalists with a passion for Latin America. They understand the dangers of working there, the friends said, and don't take unnecessary risks.

Dalton, a Conroe native who attended the University of Texas at Austin, has a "love of seeing something completely different and documenting it," said Edward Hegstrom, a Houston Chronicle reporter who has known Dalton for about five years.

Dalton, 34, and Hegstrom were neighbors in Guatemala City, where both worked in the late 1990s. Hegstrom said he was impressed that Dalton's passion extended beyond the "adrenaline rush of the big story" common in reporters and photographers.

At that time, mass graves from Guatemala's civil war were being discovered in small villages all over the country.

"He got very serious about going to all these villages," Hegstrom said of Dalton. "That's one of the things I really liked about him."

Dalton, who also worked in Panama, moved from Guatemala to Colombia about three years ago.

His parents, Benjamin and Jane Dalton, live in Conroe. They declined to comment Thursday.

Dalton returns to Houston frequently. During a summer visit, Hegstrom said Dalton talked about his desire to focus more on a longer-term project and less on daily journalism. He was considering working on a book of photos of Colombia.

Morris, a Briton, moved to Colombia from New York about five years ago and was freelancing for several news organizations, said John Otis, the Chronicle's South America bureau chief, who is based in Bogota.

The warring factions in Colombia have killed Colombian journalists but usually leave the foreign media alone, Otis said.

At least six journalists have been killed in Colombia in the past two years.

The kidnapping came as a delegation of the Inter American Press Association was visiting Colombia to urge the government to protect journalists operating there and punish those who kill or kidnap them.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:47AM

Harris witness testifies death scene 'like movie'

By RUTH RENDON

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After striking her orthodontist husband with her Mercedes-Benz and sending his body across a hotel parking lot, Clara Harris drove in circles over the body four times, put the car in reverse and ran over him again, a witness said Thursday.

"It was almost like a movie," front-desk clerk Paul Garrett Clark, 25, said during the first day of testimony of Harris' murder trial.

After state District Judge Carol Davies adjourned Thursday's proceedings, prosecutor Mia Magness said that Clara Harris last Friday tried to call her stepdaughter, who is expected to be a state's witness. Magness also said that the teen's paternal grandparents, who are being supportive of Clara Harris, also have been leaving messages on their granddaughter's cell phone. None has spoken to the teen.

Lindsey Harris, who was a front-seat passenger in the Mercedes-Benz when her father, David L. Harris, was killed, "is feeling pressured," Magness said.

The judge declined to admonish Harris or the grandparents for their actions. Defense attorney George Parnham said he had told Clara Harris and the grandparents not to try to contact Lindsey, 17.

Clark, one of four Hilton Hotel Inn employees who took the stand Thursday, said David Harris was standing beside the vehicle of his mistress, Gail Bridges, when Clara Harris roared around the corner, all the time "cackling."

"I looked up and saw his face. He had bulging eyes," Clark said of David Harris, 44, before he was struck the evening of July 24. "There was a terrified look in his eyes."

Clark said that as Harris drove around the side of Bridges' 2000 Navigator, she grazed Clark, and then hit her husband, propelling David Harris' body about 25 to 30 feet, before coming to a stop. Clark was not injured.

Clara Harris, he said, then drove across a section of the parking lot and a grassy median before running over her husband the first time. She continued in a circular pattern three more times and then stopped, put the car in reverse and ran over him a fifth time.

During his description, Clara Harris sat with her head down, and cried.

Clark was able to show the nine-woman, three-man jury the path Harris' car took by drawing on a projector shown on a wide-screen television. Jurors were shown aerial shots of the hotel parking lot.

Under questioning from Magness, Clark also said that while Clara Harris was driving in circles, he could tell that Lindsey Harris, David Harris' daughter from a previous marriage, was in the front seat screaming and trying to get out of the Mercedes-Benz.

"Please stop. Please stop the car," Clark said he heard Lindsey say.

Despite her pleas, Clark said Clara Harris continued to run over her husband.

After coming to a complete stop, Clark said, Harris got out of the car and ran to her husband and was repeatedly calling out his name.

Lindsey Harris, he said, was screaming.

Clark said both Lindsey and Clara Harris had walked into the hotel a couple of hours before the incident. Lindsey told him her brother was sick and that she needed to find her father.

Lindsey had Clark check the hotel registry for David Harris and also gave him the names David Bridges, Gail Bridges and Gail Harris. Clark told Lindsey he could not find any of the names as being registered.

Clark had checked David Harris and Bridges into Room 604 of the hotel at 6 p.m. David Harris had asked "for a nice room" and paid in cash, he said.

He also said he recognized Lindsey and Clara Harris as having been at the hotel a day before. The two women, whom he assumed were mother and daughter, ate at the hotel's restaurant. While there, he said, it appeared Clara Harris was crying and Lindsey Harris was comforting her.

As they walked through the lobby, Clara Harris went to the front desk, asked what the hotel rates were and then asked to see a suite.

About 8:30 p.m. on July 24, Clark said he looked up from the front desk after hearing shrieking and screaming.

"I looked up from the front desk computer station and I saw Clara Harris pulling and screaming at Gail Bridges," he said. Harris was pulling Bridges' hair and had pulled her to the floor.

"I jumped over the front desk to assist in the situation. No one else was and it looked pretty serious," he

said.

He got between the women by getting on top of Bridges while she was on the floor. Clara Harris, meanwhile, continued to throw closed-fist punches. She struck Clark three times in the right temple, he said.

All the while, David Harris was standing off to the side and never intervened.

Clark said Bridges was never able to get in a punch, had her blouse ripped and her purse contents strewn across the lobby.

Bridges, he said, asked him to "please help me get to my car. I've got to get out of here."

Clark said he obliged, and said David Harris was walking behind them at a distance through the parking lot.

Under cross-examination, defense attorney Parnham questioned Clark about the inconsistencies in his testimony on Thursday compared with his statement to Nassau Bay police about an hour after the incident.

Clark told Parnham he did not remember Harris "cackling" as she ran over her husband but only heard screaming. His police statement said Harris "drove across David Harris while she continued to scream and laugh."

His statement to the police also did not mention that the Mercedes-Benz had come to a complete stop after initially striking David Harris. He also neglected to enter Harris' name into the hotel computer and also told police that Clara Harris slapped Bridges, not punched her with a closed fist.

In earlier testimony, hotel employee Evangelos Smiros said that after the hotel lobby altercation, he escorted Clara Harris out of the hotel. As she was standing on one side of the hotel's front entry, she looked across the drive and glared at her husband.

David Harris, he said, was yelling, "It's over! It's over!"

Smiros said he walked Clara Harris to her car, which was parked in front of the hotel at 3000 NASA Road 1. After she backed up normally, he said, she "peeled rubber," causing her tires to squeal. He said he chased the car and was pounding on the trunk yelling, "Stop! You're going to hurt someone!"

Smiros testified he chased the car through the parking lot and heard a "thump." He said he saw Harris run over her husband three times while another hotel employee said he saw her run over him twice.

Smiros said after the Mercedes-Benz came to a stop, a sobbing Clara Harris got out of the car, went to her husband, leaned over him and said, "Are you OK?"

Another hotel employee testified he heard Harris apologize and tell her husband she loved him.

The trial, which is expected to last two weeks, will resume this morning.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:30AM

Evidence of perjury too weak

By **LISA TEACHEY** and **S.K. BARDWELL**

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A judge acquitted Houston Police Chief C.O. Bradford of aggravated perjury charges Thursday, finding the evidence was too weak to continue the case.

The crowded courtroom cracked with applause after the ruling and the more than 50 Bradford supporters in the gallery were so eager to hug the chief that it made it difficult for him to leave the courtroom.

State District Judge Brian Rains dismissed the charges just minutes after prosecutors rested their case Thursday. Such a ruling is rarely issued, legal experts said, and backs the contention of many -- from jurors to beat officers to public officials -- that the case was flimsy, at best.

Bradford said Thursday that in his 25 years in law enforcement, criminal justice and the law, "never in my wildest dreams did I envision a frivolous complaint leading to such bogus indictment. For me and my family this has been unnecessarily exhausting and very defaming."

As the jurors left the courthouse Thursday, several said all 12 would have voted to acquit Bradford.

"You're innocent until you're proven guilty. They could not prove it," said juror Rosia Moore. "All 12 of us were on the same page. We all agreed."

Surrounded by his high-profile lawyers -- Robert C. Bennett, George McCall "Mac" Secrest and Rusty Hardin -- and with his arm around wife, Dee, Bradford thanked God.

"God takes care of his children," Bradford said. "When I took my oath of office as chief of police more than six years ago I knew that some days would be better than others."

Mayor Lee Brown welcomed the news and told Bradford his job was waiting for him when Bradford returned from a vacation.

"I'm pleased with his job as police chief," Brown said. "I look forward to his coming back to work and assuming his position as Houston's police chief."

Bradford was accused of intentionally lying under oath about whether he called Assistant Chief J.L.

Breshears a "mother -----." The chief said in a police grievance hearing in May that he did not recall using profanity, but if he did, it was wrong.

Secret said the state failed to prove Bradford made a false statement and that the statement was made with the intent to deceive.

"They may have established there was a difference of recollection but at no time did Bradford have intent to deceive," Secret said.

Hardin said the judge's ruling means "that failure of memory is not a crime at least not yet in this country. And that's all this was ... Luckily the judge's ruling is that people can remember things differently in different ways.

Harris County District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal was in the hospital with a leg injury Thursday and could not be reached for comment.

Prosecutor Don Smyth did not agree with Rains' ruling.

"There's no question the chief knew what these questions were all about because he had had notice that they were coming," Smyth said. "He had notice exactly what words were going to be attributed to him and the setting."

Smyth defended his prosecution of the chief.

"We got a complaint," Smyth said. "Now is it my job to take that complaint and flush it? Or is it my job to investigate it and present it to a grand jury if there is evidence to show that it may be a truthful complaint ...

"The grand jury heard the same witnesses and even more than the judge and that jury heard. And the grand jury returned a true bill of indictment."

Although defense lawyers almost always ask for a "directed verdict" when the state rests its case, judges rarely grant them, said Neil McCabe, a professor of law at South Texas College of Law.

"Judges always deny it because there's always evidence you could let the jury use to decide," McCabe said. "Apparently in this case, the judge decided that no rational jury could have found Bradford guilty beyond a reasonable doubt based on the evidence.

"In other words, any jury that would find him guilty would have to be crazy."

A directed verdict cannot be appealed.

The allegation against Bradford stems from a grievance hearing about Capt. Mark Aguirre's use of profane and threatening language.

When asked if he called Breshears a "mother -----" during a June 2001 meeting, Bradford waffled in his answer admitting profanity may sometimes be used at meetings but that he did not recall calling Breshears the name. Bradford then denied doing it but added if he did it was wrong.

Outside the courtroom, Breshears declined to comment on the verdict.

Hans Marticiuc, president of the Houston Police Officers Union, said he hoped the Houston Police Department could begin to move forward when its chief returns to the helm.

"We all want our day in court, whether it be a trial by jury or whatever," Marticiuc said Thursday. "The chief got his."

Marticiuc said most of the officers he has talked to thought the matter was trivial and should not have gone as far as it did.

Asked whether the entire episode had harmed the reputation of the police department or Bradford, Brown said he thought the judge's decision was a strong message to the public.

"It never helps anybody to have your police chief indicted by a grand jury," the mayor said. "But I think he has been clearly exonerated. I think that speaks very loudly about the case against him. I think it speaks loudly about the chief, too. I know the chief to be a man of integrity. I don't think he would intentionally do anything that was wrong."

Breshears testified at the grievance hearing that he had once testified during an earlier hearing that Bradford had called him the name during a November 2000 meeting -- not June 2001.

About six months before the hearing Bradford had issued a written reprimand to Aguirre for using threatening language with subordinates. Bradford overruled a disciplinary committee recommendation to suspend Aguirre for five days. Aguirre was accused of calling officers under his command "sons of bitches" and "lazy bastards" and threatening to "chop (the officers') heads off starting at your anus" and "grind them up into dog patties and stomp them into pancakes."

Aguirre has since been indicted on unrelated charges of official oppression for ordering the mass arrests of hundreds of people at a westside Kmart.

The state had called three witnesses -- Breshears, Capt. Merv Yates and police union board member Ronny Martin -- who all said they had warned Bradford he would be questioned about the November 2000 meeting in which they said Bradford used the profanity with several officers.

From the stand Thursday Breshears said Bradford had called him and several other officers into his office on Nov. 3, 2000, to "chew" them out for a lax in security for the mayor's family. Brown and his family needed the security after receiving death threats during the election. But his wife's security detail had failed to show up on one occasion.

Breshears said Bradford started the meeting by saying "Sit down and shut up. All you (expletive) are in trouble," and then went on a 10-to-20-minute tirade.

Breshears testified Wednesday he was "hurt" and "dismayed" by the chief's language, but he never filed a complaint about the profanity and at the time he did not consider it disrespectful.

Although Breshears never complained about Bradford's language, a former police union lawyer found out about it and wanted Bradford to drop the disciplinary action against Aguirre so the hearing would not have to be held.

Union board member Martin said the lawyer was going to call the media and try to embarrass the chief and the department.

Aguirre remains under a gag order instituted by the department and cannot comment on Thursday's directed verdict, said Aguirre's attorney, Terry Yates.

"It won't affect our case at all," said Yates. He will defend Aguirre against five counts of official oppression in connection with an Aug. 18 raid in which 270 people were arrested.

Chronicle reporters Matt Schwartz and Kristen Mack contributed to this story.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:50AM

Q&A: C.O. BRADFORD

Perjury case was 'frivolous'

Here are excerpts from an exclusive interview that Houston Police Chief C.O. Bradford gave to Chronicle reporter Lisa Teachey after his acquittal on Thursday:

Question: Do you feel this case embarrassed you, the Police Department or the city?

Answer: This case clearly embarrassed me and my family, the city of Houston and the Houston Police Department. The frivolous complaint led to what I consider a bogus indictment. ... There was no perjury there. Clearly, when you look at my response, I answered a question three times. I don't recall. I can't remember. I categorically deny because I've got no recollection of it. And, if I did, I would be thoroughly embarrassed. I would be wrong, and that's unacceptable.

In addition to that, when you look at the fact that I was asked even a different question from what (Assistant) Chief (J.L.) Breshears was asked. Have I ever called him that name? I've known Breshears for almost 20 years. The question to him was regarding a specific meeting, a specific date, a specific time. When the question was asked of me, there was no context, no reference. I had no idea what the attorney was talking about. ... Breshears testified I called him that name once in that meeting only. Now, I don't remember calling him that name in that meeting. I don't have recollection of that. But he is saying that happened once in the total time I've known him. So I only had one chance to remember having done it. The odds were against me. I just didn't recall it. I still don't today.

Q: What are your feelings toward Capt. Mark Aguirre?

A: I think given that there's an investigation under way that he's involved in, it would not be proper that I comment.

Q: What kind of mark have the last few months left?

A: This incident for me has been unnecessarily exhausting and defaming as well. My family and I, we have suffered dearly over the last several months.

Q: Do you think the case had racial overtones?

A: I think when the allegation first came to light, there were people who said that the case had racial

overtones. There are some aspects about the case where there's a question. But, at the same time, I think that's a question again for the DA's office and those others who pushed the issue. Why did they push it?

Not to indicate that I am above the law. I'm not above the law. I've always said that. I don't mind subjecting myself to the process. I have done that.

Q: Do you think it would have gone to trial if you were white?

A: I don't determine whether cases should go to trial or not. That's a question for the district attorney's office.

Q: Do you feel that you received full support from Mayor Lee Brown and City Council?

A: Completely. Complete support.

Q: Don't police officers use profane language, particularly when speaking with each other in a departmental meeting, outside the ears of the public?

A: Profanity is within the police culture, no doubt about that. In public view, the language is much more what it should be. And it's much more restricted. Inside police locker rooms, meetings, etc., profanity is used. Not that that's right. But that's what happens. It's part of the culture. We have to work harder as professionals in that culture to reduce it.

Q: Will this incident affect your ability to lead the department?

A: Oh, I think not. If anything, it's strengthened my ability to lead the department. There were just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of officers who have stood by me throughout this ordeal. They come by my house in their cars, some are on bicycles. They just come by and park in front of the house there. They're there to just show, "This is how I can support the chief."

I've received a tremendous amount of support from the officers ... Those officers know of my integrity, know of my honesty. And every time I run into some of those officers and look into their eyes it just fuels the fire inside of me to keep my head up and keep moving. You haven't done anything wrong.

Q: What has been the hardest part of this for your family?

A: The whole idea that I have 25 years in criminal justice, the law and law enforcement. I have a reputation which is indicative of honesty and integrity. And to be charged with a crime that goes toward my honesty and my integrity, that's been very difficult on me, my name and my family. But I am very, very thankful that the community gave me the benefit of the doubt.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:19PM

Symphony managers insist wage cuts are key to fiscal stability

Musicians' charges called disheartening

By CHARLES WARD

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Houston Symphony Society managers said Thursday they were "surprised and disheartened" that musicians filed unfair-labor charges Wednesday.

In a public statement -- its first in months of contract negotiations -- management stressed "the severity of our financial crisis," indicating that no solution can be reached without the musicians' "willingness to reduce wages."

Executive director Ann Kennedy would not comment on a musicians' report that management intends to cut pay by 14 percent and reduce the orchestra by five positions, to 92, on Feb. 1.

The musicians and the society, which operates the orchestra, have been negotiating a contract to replace the one that expired Oct. 5. The orchestra continues to perform.

The symphony has a near-term financial crisis and a longer-term structural problem of recurring deficits, said Kennedy. The society is projecting a deficit of \$2.3 million on a \$23 million budget, with orchestra costs making up about 50 percent of the budget, management said.

Musicians' representative Dave Kirk said the society seems "determined to achieve cost savings at the expense of its greatest asset, the orchestra. We do not dispute the financial difficulties of the society and are willing to work on both revenue and expenses to keep a world-class symphony here."

The players have proposed a number of ways to save money, Kirk added.

"We are doing everything to address (the problems) within the context of maintaining our artistic excellence," Kennedy said.

"If we were to address this problem from a financial point of view only, the proposal (made to the musicians) would be much more severe."

Kennedy said management is working on an ambitious business plan to achieve financial stability and artistic excellence in five years. Details should be ready by May.

The musicians' complaint to the National Labor Relations Board includes charges that the society has made unilateral changes in schedules and programming and has refused to supply enough information for them to evaluate the orchestra's fiscal condition.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:26PM

Kingsville official seeks court order to keep job

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI -- A federal judge is deciding whether to continue delaying a dismissal vote on Kingsville's city manager amid allegations drug dealers are behind plans to oust him and an aggressive police chief.

Hector Hinojosa obtained a temporary restraining order that stopped a city commission vote to fire him on Jan. 13, the same day that three .38-caliber bullets with the names of the mayor and two city commissioners were found in a City Hall overnight drop box.

The commission was that night to vote on a 30-day suspension for Hinojosa, an apparent step toward firing him.

In his request for the order, Hinojosa said he was targeted because the city manager is the only one authorized to fire the real target -- police Chief Sam Granato.

"The individuals and organizations engaged in racketeering activity have made an attempt to obstruct justice," the request said. "They plan to accomplish this by having Chief Granato fired. The plaintiff (Hinojosa) will not fire Chief Granato."

A week earlier, Granato arrested 53-year-old Modesto "Mo" Gonzalez on charges he sold cocaine to an undercover buyer.

U.S. District Judge Hayden Head's order expires on Thursday. Hinojosa is now seeking an injunction that will put longer protections on his job.

Ricardo Navarro, the outside counsel hired to represent Kingsville, said the judge may have been quick to comply with last week's request because of the weight of the allegations. "I think that the judge, out of an abundance of caution, enjoined the meeting. Now that he's had a chance to look at it closer, we don't think he's going to keep the case."

Navarro said he would argue that the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act cited in Hinojosa's application should not apply in this case.

"On straight legal grounds, the RICO statute that they're relying on does not operate against government

bodies," he said.

Mayor Phil Esquivel said that city officials had no foreknowledge of the restraining order and hadn't been able to weigh in.

"All the judge heard was one side," he said.

He said the commission supported the police department and called allegations the commission's underlying goal was to fire the police chief "bizarre."

"Why would we want to help the druggies?" he asked.

Esquivel said Hinojosa's foot-dragging on a landfill project means the city now has to pay \$25,000 a month to truck garbage to Robstown. His failure to act on a drainage bond issue means the city will have to pay significantly higher interest, he said.

Hinojosa also didn't turn in all the necessary paperwork in a community development block grant application, which resulted in the state's putting a two-year suspension on the city.

Jan. 23, 2003, 9:47PM

Flu outbreak expected here

Copyright 2003 Houston Chronicle

Houston area schools have not had the large influenza outbreaks that closed schools in North and Central Texas during the holidays, but a specialist here warns the worst is yet to come.

"It has been all over the rest of the state and it should be here soon," said Dr. Paul Glezen, an epidemiologist at Baylor College of Medicine's Influenza Research Center.

The center tracks influenza patterns and tests treatments and vaccines. Glezen said the Houston area usually sees major flu outbreaks before North Texas does.

"It's likely to peak here in mid-February -- and follow the usual pattern -- but it is getting started here," Glezen said.

He said that he was unaware of any major outbreaks at Houston-area schools but that Texas Children's Hospital saw a slight increase in flu cases last week.

Glezen encouraged people to get the vaccine now, saying it is about 80-percent effective.

"It tends to pick up three to four weeks after kids get back into school," he said.

Jan. 23, 2003, 9:57PM

County files suit against dry cleaner

Business allegedly contaminated 41 wells through solvent's release

By JO ANN ZUÑIGA and ROMA KHANNA

Copyright 2003 Houston Chronicle

Harris County on Thursday filed suit against a dry-cleaning business, joining others in the Cypress-Fairbanks community who accuse the company of contaminating wells by releasing a cancer-causing agent into groundwater.

The Commissioners Court earlier this week agreed to sue Bell Dry Cleaners, which is accused of releasing a dry-cleaning solvent, tetrachloroethylene, that seeped into 41 wells, including one that serves a day-care center.

Alexander Chae, attorney for the cleaner's previous owner, Choon Kim, said his client did not concede that Bell was the source of the contamination.

The center, Finch's Gymnastics USA & Childcare at 10903 Tower Oaks, is suing the company. The dry cleaner, at 11600 Jones, is about 1,000 feet from the center.

It is also suing the cleaner's previous landlords, strip mall owner Henry T.T. Lucky Inc., and the manufacturers of dry-cleaning equipment and solvent.

Lucky, in turn, is suing the cleaner and others.

The county is suing both Lucky and Bell Dry Cleaners, claiming violations of the Texas Solid Waste Disposal Act and the Texas Water Code.

"We are working with the state and federal government to speed up the remediation and cleanup process as well as to find an alternative water source," County Attorney Michael Stafford said Thursday.

Donna Hofbauer, who lives in the Cypress-Fairbanks area, said she discovered her well contaminated in April. She was among the residents who earlier this week urged the Commissioners Court to file suit.

"We hope this will cut through some of the red tape that has left us without a solution," Hofbauer said.

"One day, we have a nice house that is our home, and the next, it is worth next to nothing. My water is orange. My clothes stink. We need help," she said.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality discovered the contamination in December 2000 after it sampled the well of the day care.

Agency officials found high levels of the chemical in the water. The center began serving bottled water and store-bought ice.

But the agency would not begin to investigate the source of the contamination until February 2002. Agency officials cited a large workload and a cash-strapped budget for the delay.

Since then, the commission has sampled more than 200 wells within a half-mile radius of the cleaner every 30 to 60 days. It has discovered 41 tainted wells, at least 19 with high amounts.

In some wells, the chemical was found at levels 25 times those considered safe, according to the commission.

The commission recommended the area for the Federal Superfund Site Discovery and Assessment Program, which cleans up sites, usually abandoned, that could be hazardous to public health or the environment.

The Environmental Protection Agency is determining whether the site will qualify for the program, the commission said.

If it chooses to take on the project, the commission said the agency could later take legal action to recoup cleanup costs.

The dry-cleaning solvent can cause dizziness, nausea, headaches and sleepiness in high concentrations. Long-term exposure can cause cancer and kidney or liver damage.

ThisWeek correspondent Paris Achen contributed to this story.

Jan. 23, 2003, 9:59PM

Principal reverses stance on gay article

By LUCAS WALL

Copyright 2003 Houston Chronicle

Klein High School's principal reversed his censorship of the student newspaper Thursday, telling editors he will no longer prohibit the Klein Bearchat from publishing an article and commentary on efforts to form a Gay-Straight Alliance at the school.

A lesbian student filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday against the Klein Independent School District for its failure to approve the alliance. Editors of the Bearchat, a monthly newspaper, complained that Principal Pat Huff had forbidden them from writing about the controversy in three previous issues.

After the Houston Chronicle reported the censorship Thursday, Huff informed the Bearchat he would allow a story on the proposed GSA to be published in the Jan. 31 issue, said author Tina Macias. Huff also decided to allow a commentary written by another Bearchat staff member in opposition of the lawsuit.

"He said since the veil has been lifted and since it's already the talk of the school, then we can write about it," said Macias, the features editor.

The Bearchat may not run anything about the alliance on its front page, Macias said.

Macias is rewriting her story to reflect the lawsuit filing and said she's pleased it will be published. But, she added, she would like it to run on the front page and she's disappointed that the administration suppressed it for months.

"Everyone already knows about it," she said. The story "would have had a bigger impact in November or October."

Liz Johnson, assistant superintendent for community relations, said the district was unaware of Huff's censorship.

"The attorney has advised the articles run," Johnson said. "The principal's feelings were that it would create a great deal of controversy, but now I think, with all the media coverage, that reason has kind of evaporated."

Huff could not be reached for comment Thursday afternoon.

Dallas Freeman, editor in chief, said he's satisfied with the decision but would like to see Huff's prior review of newspaper stories curtailed. Several Bearchat articles have been censored this year, including those on AIDS, street racing and restroom use, editors said.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:47PM

Rangers still looking into reports of harassment in Haltom City jail

Associated Press

HALTOM CITY -- Newly released documents show that the Texas Rangers continue investigating allegations of sexual misconduct in the Haltom City jail and could pursue more criminal charges, despite word that the probe had ended.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram obtained the documents Wednesday under the Texas Public Information Act. But the state Department of Public Safety, which oversees the Rangers, released only summaries of the reports, citing "several concurrent ongoing investigations."

Two weeks ago, the DPS said the Rangers' probe ended in December. On Wednesday, Lt. Lane Akin of the Rangers and Haltom City police spokesman Jeff Gray declined to discuss specifics or say when the investigations might finish.

Haltom City police began examining the jail in March 2001 when a woman being held on traffic violation warrants complained that jailer Clint Wade Weaver forced her to have sex in exchange for early release. Weaver pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of official oppression in March.

A second woman made similar allegations against Weaver in May.

Ranger Sgt. Ted Poling began assisting Haltom City detectives in their investigation in September, according to the documents. By that time, six women had sued Weaver and Haltom City, saying they were ogled, fondled or sexually assaulted in the jail.

Poling began by reviewing affidavits prepared by the women's attorney, Jim Skinner of Dallas, the reports show. Akin said Poling also interviewed the women.

Poling's report depicts Weaver as having had sex with women in several areas of the jail, including the kitchen and the break room.

The Rangers' investigation led to three more criminal counts against Weaver, who was indicted in October on a felony count of sexual assault and two counts of improper sexual activity with a person in custody.

Two weeks ago, Skinner released a statement from Weaver that accused Municipal Judge Jack Byno of watching women undress in the jail, making lewd comments about them and harassing female employees. Skinner said the allegations were backed by a videotaped deposition from a jail supervisor.

Byno resigned Jan. 14, but only after the City Council declared that it had reviewed the allegations and found them baseless.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:01PM

Trailer home blaze kills mother, her 3 children

Associated Press

HERMLEIGH -- An 18-year-old woman and her three children were killed early Thursday when they were trapped inside their mobile home as fire raced through, officials said.

Four people escaped, but Desiree Flores, her daughters ages 2 and 1, and a 1-month-old son could not get out.

"The four on the south end of the trailer could not get to the door," said Scurry County Sheriff Darren Jackson.

Cy Posey, the fire marshal in Snyder, said Flores apparently was awakened by the smell of smoke and woke an 18-year-old man. He then tried to wake everyone up and clear the trailer, but he couldn't get back into the room where Flores and the children were, Posey said.

The 18-year-old then scrambled outside and tried to get back in a back door but was unable to, said Posey, who said it was the most people killed in a fire in the area in 20 years.

The trailer was packed with space heaters that were turned on as temperatures were in the 20s. But fire investigators said they apparently didn't cause the blaze.

"We have no idea, and with the amount of damage ... it will take a long while," said Kelly Vandygriff, deputy state fire marshal. "It burned so hot, and with the existing combustibles they were just so heavily damaged, it was hard to tell anything at all."

He said the cause is officially classified as undetermined, but the case will be reopened if needed.

All that remained of the trailer Thursday were a few blackened, twisted metal fragments. A nearby car was burned, and roosters apparently owned by the residents strolled around the mostly dirt front yard.

"There's nothing left but the foundation," said James Parks of the Red Cross office in Odessa.

Investigators didn't know exactly how fast the trailer burned, but Posey estimated firefighters arrived 12 to 15 minutes after a 911 call from the trailer about 1:10 a.m. The caller did not say anything after getting through, and dispatchers got no answer when they called back.

The injured man was 47-year-old Salvador Luna, Parks said. His wife, the 18-year-old male and a 12-year-old also escaped.

"Mr. Luna entered the home to try to save the others, but wasn't able to reach them," Jackson told the Snyder Daily News.

Sue Hoover of the Red Cross office in Midland said Luna tried to turn on a hose to fight the fire, but pipes were frozen.

The bodies of the young children and mother were taken to the Lubbock County Medical Examiner's office. Their names weren't released Thursday.

Hermleigh is about 70 miles northwest of Abilene.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:44PM

Mexican drug lords get 2 life terms each

Empire brought 75 tons of pot to Texas

Associated Press

MIDLAND -- Two Mexican drug lords, captured after a daring escape from an Australian prison, were sentenced Thursday to two life terms and 60 more years each on drug charges.

They were believed to have moved about 75 tons of marijuana into West Texas as part of their drug smuggling empire.

Francisco Rios Balderrama, 33, and Armando Garcia Quiroz, 34, were convicted in September of continuing criminal enterprise, nine counts of possession with intent to distribute marijuana, four counts of money laundering and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Trial testimony showed the men used drug money to buy police favors along with murder and threats of murder as intimidation.

"The jury heard and convicted you of the most horrendous behavior, including murder threats and intimidation," U.S. District Judge Royal Furgeson said before pronouncing Balderrama's sentence.

The courtroom was packed with family and friends, many of whom traveled from northern Mexico for the sentencing, the Midland Reporter-Telegram reported in today's editions.

"These life sentences should send a chilling message to drug dealers that selling drugs in Texas comes at a very high cost, namely the possibility of spending the rest of your life behind bars," said U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton.

Balderrama and Quiroz were arrested while leaving the 2000 Olympics in Sydney but escaped from a high-security Australian jail on Sept. 11, 2001, by hijacking a large truck and blasting through security gates.

They were recaptured two weeks later.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:23AM

Slain man tied to bed, officials say

Murder charge has been filed against stabbing victim's wife

By MIKE GLENN

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A northwest Harris County man found partially buried in his back yard was tied to his bed when he was stabbed to death, investigators said, and his wife has been charged with murder.

Sheriff's detectives said some type of cord was found wrapped around the wrist and leg of Jeffrey Wright, 34, when his body was pulled from a shallow grave in back of his home in the 19800 block of Berry Tree on Wednesday.

Murder charges were filed Thursday against Susan Wright, 27. Detectives said her husband likely died Jan. 13 after being stabbed and cut almost 200 times.

"It happened in the bedroom," Sgt. T.E. Kiser said. "He was tied to the bed and then his body was taken out to the patio."

Detectives couldn't confirm whether drugs were found in the victim's system because toxicology test results were still pending.

Although Susan Wright's lawyer, Neal Davis, said she admitted killing her husband in self-defense, detectives haven't been able to question her.

"He (Davis) is telling us he has her checked into some psychiatric hospital somewhere," Kiser said. "We asked if he could have her brought up to talk, and he declined."

Detectives said Wright filed a family violence report against her husband Jan. 15 -- two days after they believe he was killed.

"Susan Wright is wanted for the murder of her husband and is not in custody," Kiser said. "We have no idea where she's at."

Wright will surrender to authorities this morning, Davis said late Thursday. "I'm going to take her there myself," he said.

Davis declined to comment about the details of the case, saying it was "too early."

"We're still doing our own investigation," he said.

Davis said Wright has been undergoing psychiatric care at an undisclosed facility and that he always intended to keep her there until an arrest warrant was issued.

"She's been in a terrible mental state," he said. "She's just way too fragile psychologically to talk to (the detectives) and undergo hours of interrogation."

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:41AM

Boy named honorary fire chief

Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE -- An 8-year-old Brownsville boy was named an honorary fire chief Wednesday for leading his 96-year-old great-grandmother to safety after a fire broke out in her house.

Austin Serra was watching television last week when a fire started in the kitchen. He said his great-grandmother, Irene P. Gonzalez, had wanted to try to put the fire out with glasses of water. Gonzalez was reluctant to leave, so Austin insisted.

"There was too much smoke," he said in a story in Thursday's editions of the Brownsville Herald. "She didn't listen, so I just took her hand and took her outside."

Gonzalez recalled with pride how her great-grandson led her from the house and put a jacket over her.

"I was very afraid and very nervous," she said. "I didn't know what to do."

There was no major damage done to the home.

Along with his new title, Austin was given a firefighter's badge for his bravery before his third-grade class Wednesday.

"You have to use your position to educate the rest of the kids," said Brownsville Fire Inspector Cassandra Teran. "In case anything like that ever happens, they remember what Fire Chief Austin taught them."

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:24PM

Michigan trip a fare deal for cabbie

Lansing man 'a real nice guy,' explains Seguin taxi driver

Associated Press

SEGUIN, Texas -- Cab driver Pat Kelly accepted a fare that kept him away from home for half a week, but it was worth it, he said.

Dan Schroeder of Lansing, Mich., who was in Texas for his son's wedding paid him \$1,000 to drive him from Seguin to Lansing, a 27-hour drive, Kelly said.

"A \$1,000 fare is not a bad way to start the year," Kelly said. "I'm a vehicle for hire. If you are willing to pay my price, I'll take you where you want to go."

The adventure began at 5:30 a.m. on Jan. 2, when he got a telephone call from Schroeder.

The Michigan man had driven from Michigan with his brother and mother for the Houston wedding of Schroeder's son. After the wedding, the three were on their way to Tucson, Ariz., to visit more family before heading back to Michigan. But in Seguin, after a quarrel with his mother, Schroeder sent her and his brother on without him.

"First I was driving him back to Houston so he could stay with his son," Kelly was quoted in Thursday's editions of the San Antonio Express-News.

But at Flatonia -- about 35 miles into what would have been a trip of about 150 miles on Interstate 10 -- Schroeder decided he didn't want to impose on his son right after the wedding, so he told Kelly, "Take me to Lansing."

The trip was about 1,400 miles and Kelly usually charges \$1 a mile, but they negotiated the price to an even \$1,000.

Kelly called his wife to get her approval. At first, she was reluctant.

"I don't like him being on the road that long, but then again, we paid the rent with one trip," Carrie Kelly said. "I just told him to get a money order and not carry so much cash around in his pocket."

The cabbie got to watch the national college championship game after arriving in Michigan, he said.

"It took 27 hours to get there," Kelly said. "I was away for 3 1/2 days. But he was a real nice guy. He let me spend the night at his house, and we watched the Ohio State-Miami game out in his garage with some of his buddies, and he fed me pretty well."

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:19PM

Construction to cause delays

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Road work on portions of three major arteries could delay motorists this weekend.

- The Southwest Freeway will be closed at Westpark from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. each day through Monday. Detour to the frontage road.
- FM 1959's eastbound and westbound lanes at the North Freeway will be closed from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Detour at Scarsdale.
- The East Loop southbound exit ramp to the Eastex Freeway will be closed from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. through Monday. Detour on the frontage road to Broadway and U-turn to eastbound lanes.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:42PM

OBITUARIES

Ella White, ex-manager of historic residence

By KEVIN MORAN

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DICKINSON -- Ella Salvato White, former manager of Galveston's historic Bishop's Palace, died Tuesday of cancer. She was 78.

White managed the Bishop's Palace, one of the nation's best-known historic residences, from 1983 to 1990. Before that, she operated the Rendezvous Restaurant in rural west Galveston County, an eatery founded by her first husband, Michael A. Salvato.

"Most important, she was a fine, Christian lady, always concerned about others and looking out for others' needs," said Monsignor Eugene Cargill, a 40-year friend who hired White at the Bishop's Palace.

"I always said she was a dying breed, because she would call you on the phone and say, 'Oh, I have a little extra time today and I wondered if there's something you need me to do for you.' She was most unusual," Cargill said. "She was also a superior gourmet cook. You could ask her for her recipe for spaghetti and she would offer to make some for you and bring it over."

Cargill said he asked White to go to work at the Bishop's Palace when she decided to close the Rendezvous, which drew astronauts, politicians and others from Houston.

White was born Sept. 15, 1924, in Bowling Green, Ky. She was working for the FBI in Washington, D.C., when she met Salvato, who was in the Marines.

The couple married and moved to Dickinson, where she taught at Church of the True Cross until she took over the restaurant after Salvato died.

White also survived her second husband, Clarence "Red" White.

She is survived by sons Charles and Mark Salvato; a daughter, Martha Salvato; and stepchildren Becky Goodman, Deborah Wax, John White, Mary Lee Nankivell and Suzzane Israel.

A memorial Mass is scheduled for 10 a.m. today at St. Mary's Catholic Church in League City. Burial

was Thursday at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Dickinson after a private funeral Mass.

Deaths elsewhere

Nell Carter, who played the sassy housekeeper on the 1980s sitcom *Gimme a Break!* and won a Tony Award in 1978 for her sultry turn in the Broadway musical *Ain't Misbehavin'*, Jan. 23. She was 54:

Irene Diamond, a successful scout of scripts and talent in Hollywood who became a leading philanthropist, Jan. 22. She was 92.

Composer **Doris Fisher**, whose steady stream of hit songs in the 1940s included *You Always Hurt the One You Love*, Jan. 15 after a brief illness. She was 87.

Kinji Fukasaku, a Japanese film director known for his yakuza movie series and the war epic *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Jan. 12 of prostate cancer. He was 72.

Sarah Pettit, a founding editor and former editor in chief of *Out* magazine, one of the first gay and lesbian publications with mainstream status, Jan. 22 at Columbia-Presbyterian Center of New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan. She was 36. The cause was non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, her family said.

Gavin Lyall, a prolific and popular British writer of thrillers, Jan. 20 of cancer. He was 70.

Stephen Kates, a cellist and teacher who was a Tchaikovsky International Cello Competition prize winner, Jan. 18 at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. He was 59.

Russell Rourke, a Defense Department official who played an important role in the Reagan administration's defense build-up policy of the early 1980s and then spent five months as the Air Force's top civilian, Jan. 19 of malignant melanoma. He was 71.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:21PM

News briefs

Staff and Wire Reports

Area

\$7.5 million awarded for downtown street repairs

The Metropolitan Transit Authority board awarded \$7.5 million in contracts Thursday for three downtown street projects expected to start within 30 days.

A \$5.6 million contract went to KCC Group Inc. for an overhaul of Travis from Alabama to Pierce. The work, which will take almost a year, will involve complete repavement of the street, landscaping and new sidewalks.

The same type of work will be done on Jefferson from Smith to Travis and on St. Joseph Parkway from Brazos to Louisiana. These jobs will be done by Contractor Technology Ltd. for \$1.9 million and are expected to take about five months.

Boy, 12, to face charges for fire at apartments

A 12-year-old boy will be charged with arson for igniting a blaze that destroyed a building in the Chesapeake Apartments, the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office said.

The building, in the 8700 block of Point Park Drive in the Cypress-Fairbanks area, caught fire at about 6:30 p.m. Jan. 6.

The juvenile and a 7-year-boy set the structure ablaze with matches and a lighter while playing with a bottle and leaves, said investigator T.A. Kuhel.

Potential schools chief leaves accounting job

Gaspar Mir, one of five people being groomed by the Houston Independent School District as a potential superintendent, has stepped down as managing partner of the public accounting firm he helped launch in 1988.

Roland Rodriguez, another founder of Mir, Fox and Rodriguez, will now oversee the company's day-to-

day operations.

Mir will continue on the firm's board but will devote his energies to HISD, where he is an executive adviser to Superintendent Kaye Stripling.

Local Army reservists will help fight terror

Members of the 75th Army Reserve Division have been called to active duty to support the war on terrorism, a division spokesman said Thursday. The training and support division headquartered on Old Spanish Trail received mobilization orders Wednesday for Operation Enduring Freedom, said Capt. Chris Cummings.

The 3,000-member division trains other units in a nine-state region in everything from basic military operations to war games.

The 75th includes four brigades in Houston, Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Fort Riley, Kan., and Fort Sill, Okla.

Shelter needs coats for homeless youth

The frigid weather has Covenant House Texas, a Montrose-area shelter for homeless youth, seeking donations of coats and warm clothing for its guests.

Items can be dropped off at the shelter a 1111 Lovett, near Westheimer and Montrose.

For more information, call Sarah Fife at 713-523-2231, extension 221.

State

Man is acquitted of threat to burn eatery

BROWNSVILLE -- A man who had complained to police many times about loud music from a restaurant has been acquitted of threatening to set fire to the place.

A six-person jury in County Court at Law No. 2 in Brownsville ruled Wednesday there was insufficient evidence to convict Duane F. Hose of threatening Paul Bous, owner of Kiko's Mexican Restaurant in Harlingen, on Oct. 6, 2001, by saying, "I'm here to burn you and your place down."

Esteban Gonzales, one of Hose's two defense attorneys, said discrepancies in testimony by Bous and Harlingen police officer Gerald Manthey caused the jury to doubt the threat by the Harlingen resident was serious.

Hose and other residents had called police "at least 300 times" to complain about loud music coming from a cabana outside the restaurant, according to testimony.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:15AM

New addition at BMC gives lift to profits

By DARRIN SCHLEGEL

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BMC Software, buoyed by strong sales from its recent Remedy acquisition, swung to a third-quarter profit and raised its year-end earnings forecast Thursday.

Investors warmed to the Houston company's improved outlook, lifting BMC shares by 10 percent, or \$1.76, to \$19.12.

And analysts said the company's balance sheet and fundamentals are faring reasonably well despite continued weakness in technology spending.

"I think it is a good indication of stability," said Sarah Mattson, an analyst with RBC Capital Markets.

BMC, a maker of software for managing and monitoring large networks, attributed its profitability to the purchase of Remedy, seasonal upticks in spending and robust sales of new product offerings.

Remedy had revenues of \$25 million with expenses of \$15.3 million after BMC acquired it with about six weeks to go in the quarter that ended Dec. 31.

BMC bought the Mountain View, Calif.-based company, which makes help-desk service software, for \$355 million from bankrupt Peregrine Systems. At the time, BMC expected Remedy to add \$20 million to \$24 million to third-quarter sales, with operating expenses about the same.

BMC also posted gains in license revenues of its Patrol software, which rose 53 percent in the third quarter compared to the second quarter. Company officials had predicted a seasonal gain in that area, but it was also helped by strong sales of a new product called Patrol Express, Beauchamp said.

For the quarter, BMC said it had net income of \$12.1 million, or 5 cents a share, on revenues of \$349.6 million.

That compares with a loss of \$94.5 million, or 39 cents, on sales of \$321 million a year ago.

License revenues jumped 11 percent to \$168.5 million.

BMC also revised its earnings outlook for 2003 to a range of 46 cents to 49 cents per share, up from a previous projection of 32 cents to 39 cents.

That is far ahead of the average estimate of 36 cents from analysts polled by Thomson First Call.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:35PM

Dynegy sells unit in Europe

Company leaving communications

By LAURA GOLDBERG

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Dynegy took its first step Thursday in exiting its money-losing telecommunications business.

The Houston-based company announced that it had sold its European communications operation, which revolves around a high-capacity broadband network with access points in 32 Western European cities.

The price tag wasn't disclosed, which indicates the deal was a small one. The operation was bought by an affiliate of Klesch & Co., a London-based private equity firm that specializes in investing in companies that need restructuring.

Dynegy said it expects to report a "slight gain" on the sale during this quarter. Additional details are expected when the company releases fourth-quarter 2002 results next week.

Because of the sale, the company will also free itself of about \$150 million worth of lease obligations related to running the European communications business.

The elimination of that cost for Dynegy is a highlight of its announcement, said Blake Young, the company's executive vice president, administration and technology,

Shares in Dynegy, which has been working to cut costs and reduce debt, closed up 26 cents, or 12 percent, at \$2.40 Thursday.

The company still plans to sell its domestic communications business, which has a network with coverage across 44 major metropolitan locations.

If it can't reach a deal, the business simply will be shut down. A decision either way is expected early this year.

Young said the number of interested potential buyers for the domestic operation has been "significant." The company is in the process of creating a short list.

Dynegy has about \$360 million lease obligations tied to the U.S. business.

The company, which began its communications business in the fourth quarter of 2000, never turned a profit on it. As time went on, though, it lost less money on the business.

It has 65 wholesale customers using the domestic network and another 53 using the European set-up. Klesch will absorb the European customers.

The company, which is working to turn itself around, is focusing on its power plants, its regulated Illinois utility and its natural gas liquids business.

Other assets have already been sold, and the company is getting out of the energy trading business.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:27PM

Marathon Oil earnings beat Street

High prices squeezed refining while helping production side

By MICHAEL DAVIS

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Higher oil prices helped Marathon Oil Corp. more than double its fourth-quarter earnings, but the company reported Thursday that those same high prices put the squeeze on the company's refining profits.

The problem faced by the Houston oil company, as well as other refiners, is that fuel prices have not kept pace with increases for crude.

Marathon's refining and marketing profits for the year were down 80 percent compared with 2001.

The company said that although 2002 was a challenging year for the refining and marketing business, Marathon's integrated operations enabled it to partially offset the commodity market volatility.

"While the downstream business had strong operating performance, that segment was challenged by the high price of crude oil and narrow margins, while our upstream business realized the benefits of high crude oil prices," Clarence Cazalot, Marathon chief executive, wrote in a statement.

For the fourth quarter, the company had net income of \$194 million, or 62 cents per share, on revenues of \$8.6 billion. That compared with a fourth-quarter 2001 net loss of \$898 million, or \$2.90 per share, on revenues of \$6.8 billion. The net loss in the year-ago quarter was the result of a \$1.144 billion after-tax loss related to its split from United States Steel and a \$28 million after-tax write-down of inventory value.

The company's fourth-quarter earnings were slightly above analysts' estimates, which expected the company to earn 61 cents for the quarter, according to Thomson First Call.

Marathon shares closed Thursday at \$21.10, up 16 cents per share.

For the year, Marathon reported net income of \$563 million, or \$1.81 per share, on revenues of \$31.7 billion, compared with net income of \$1.485 billion, or \$4.80 per diluted share, on revenues of \$33 billion for 2001.

The company said it was able to replace more than 250 percent of its production during 2002 and ended the year with proven reserves of over 1.25 billion barrels of oil equivalent, a figure the company expects to rise to 1.4 billion barrels of oil equivalent by the end of 2004, excluding acquisitions and dispositions.

Operating profits for the company's oil and gas exploration and production business totaled \$345 million in the fourth quarter of 2002 and \$1.033 billion for the year, compared with \$120 million and \$1.419 billion in the comparable periods of 2001.

The company especially saw a jump in its international oil and gas exploration and production profits, which rose from \$5 million in the fourth quarter of 2001 to \$147 million in fourth-quarter 2002.

The increase in the fourth quarter was a result of additional production from Equatorial Guinea, higher oil and gas prices, a \$26 million increase in the estimated value of long-term natural gas contracts and lower dry well expense, the company said.

Refining and marketing operating profits reflected the poor margins the sector experienced during the year.

Operating income for the refining and marketing business was \$88 million in fourth quarter 2002 and \$356 million for the year, versus \$221 million and \$1.914 billion in the comparable periods of 2001.

The lower profit margin resulted from increased crude oil costs, which exceeded the rise in refined product selling prices for all commodities other than gasoline and distillates, and manufacturing expenses compared with the prior-year period, the company said.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:16PM

Warmer forecast pushes gas lower

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NEW YORK -- Natural gas futures fell 3.8 percent Thursday, erasing an early surge to an almost two-year high, amid speculation that moderating temperatures next week will slow heating demand.

Natural gas for February delivery fell 21.5 cents to \$5.458 per thousand cubic feet on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It earlier reached \$5.85, the highest price since Feb. 14, 2001.

Crude oil futures fell, as bearish weekly inventory data and hopes for a full resumption of Venezuelan oil output reassured traders.

Light, sweet crude for March delivery ended down 60 cents at \$32.25 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

February heating oil rose 0.34 cent to close at 91.53 cents a gallon, while February gasoline slipped 0.12 cent to settle at 89.81 cents a gallon.

In London, March Brent settled down 62 cents at \$29.72 a barrel.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:24PM

Burlington Resources thrived in 4th quarter

By MICHAEL DAVIS

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Burlington Resources reported a strong rise in fourth-quarter earnings Thursday, aided by oil and gas production increases in Canada and in Wyoming's Madden Field, the company said.

The company described 2002 as a turning point in its strategy to upgrade its asset mix while shedding or shifting its focus away from assets with low potential.

The Houston oil company had fourth-quarter 2002 net income of \$157 million, or 78 cents per share, on revenues of \$817 million. That compared with a prior-year fourth-quarter loss of \$79 million or 39 cents per share, on revenues of \$626 million.

The company outpaced Wall Street's expectations. Analysts were looking for the company to report earnings of 66 cents per share for the fourth quarter, according to estimates compiled by Thomson First Call.

Burlington's shares closed Thursday at \$43.34, up 63 cents per share.

For full-year 2002, the company had net income of \$454 million, or \$2.25 per share, on revenues of \$2.9 billion. That compared with the previous year's net income of \$561 million, or \$2.70 per share, on revenues of \$3.3 billion.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:26PM

Economic report tossup leaves markets going up

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) -- Two reports painted a hazy picture of the economy Thursday, suggesting that economic activity is gaining momentum but is being stymied by business and investor concerns over a war with Iraq.

The Index of Leading Economic Indicators rose in December for the third straight month, buoyed by increases in building permits for new housing and manufacturers' new orders for consumer goods, according to the Conference Board, a private industry group.

Separately, the Labor Department reported the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits rose by 18,000 last week, signaling that the weak economy is still prompting companies to lay off workers to cut costs.

The financial markets finished higher after digesting the conflicting reports. Wall Street snapped a five-day losing streak Thursday after positive earnings from companies such as Texas Instruments enticed investors to pick up bargains.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 50.74, or 0.6 percent, to 8,369.47, after falling as much as 62 points earlier in the day. The Nasdaq composite index climbed 28.79, or 2.1 percent, to 1,388.27. The Standard & Poor's 500 index gained 8.98, or 1 percent, to 887.34.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners 9-to-5 on the New York Stock Exchange. Consolidated volume was heavy at 2.16 billion shares, compared with 1.94 billion traded Wednesday.

The Russell 2000 index rose 3.15, or 0.8 percent, to 383.68.

The price of the benchmark 10-year Treasury note fell point, or \$1.88 per \$1,000 in face value. Its yield rose to 3.94 percent from 3.92 percent Wednesday.

In late New York trading, the euro was quoted at \$1.0754, up from \$1.0716 late Wednesday. The dollar was quoted at 118.08 yen, down from 118.34 yen.

The dollar fell to 10.7235 pesos from 10.7965. The peso rose to 9.3253 cents from 9.2623.

Mexico's bolsa index closed up 30.35 points, or 0.5 percent, to 6,054.44 points.

Japan's Nikkei stock average finished 2.1 percent higher Thursday. In Europe, France's CAC-40 dropped 0.5 percent, Britain's FTSE 100 lost 1.5 percent and Germany's DAX index rose 0.3 percent.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:22AM

Day trader gets light term over phony profit warning

Dow Jones News Service

NEW YORK -- A Houston day trader convicted of posting a phony Lucent Technologies profit warning on the Internet during the height of the dot-com boom was sentenced to the two months in prison he has already served.

Fred Moldofsky, 46, who now holds a \$30,000-a-year job at a Texas refinery, could have received a six-year prison sentence. The Manhattan U.S. Attorney's Office argued that the fake press release, posted in March 2000, sent Lucent's shares tumbling by 3.6 percent and harmed investors.

In handing down the sentence this week, U.S. District Judge Robert Patterson in Manhattan noted Moldofsky's otherwise clean criminal record and that he didn't make any money off the bogus release.

The judge imposed a \$4,000 fine, though, to send a message that "you can't have people posting messages on the Internet willy-nilly." He also ordered Moldofsky to be confined to his home, when not working, for six months.

Moldofsky, who wore jeans, sneakers and appeared unshaven, told the judge he didn't realize he was breaking any law when he posted the fake release on Yahoo's message board. "I deeply regret what happened," he said. "There was never any intent to defraud investors."

Moldofsky was convicted of one count of securities fraud in March 2001.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:28PM

Amazon has good quarter, is optimistic

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Amazon.com Thursday reported its second-ever quarterly net profit and raised its outlook, buoyed by growing holiday sales in the last three months of 2002 and its ongoing free shipping incentive.

For 2003, the Seattle-based online retailer said it expected sales to grow over 15 percent, up from its previous forecast for growth of at least 10 percent.

Analysts, who have been expressing concern that Amazon's share valuation may be getting too high after a 75 percent rally in 2002, had been looking for a rise in the Web retailer's sales forecast.

Amazon.com reported a 40 percent drop in its fourth-quarter profit but beat analysts' expectations as the Internet retailer said it plans to make free shipping a permanent promotion.

In other earnings reported Thursday:

- Shares of AT&T plunged nearly 20 percent after the struggling phone giant offered only glimmers of optimism about the coming year, with business shrinking because of long-distance competition, consumers' increased use of wireless phones and the weak economy.
- Nokia, the world's biggest maker of mobile phones, said its fourth-quarter profits more than doubled from results depressed by charges a year ago but warned that sales for the first quarter would be hurt by a softer market.
- Drug makers Schering-Plough, Eli Lilly and Novartis posted higher profits, but the 2003 outlook is bleak for two of them because of manufacturing problems and fierce competition.
- Packaged goods giant Sara Lee more than doubled its profit in its fiscal second quarter, helped by cost savings from its restructuring and a favorable comparison to a difficult period a year ago.
- EMC, one of the top makers of data storage systems, reported a smaller quarterly loss as savings from job cuts and other cost reductions offset lower revenues.
- Amgen, the world's largest biotechnology company, said quarterly profit nearly tripled on strong sales of its anemia and immunity boosting drugs.

- UnitedHealth Group, the No. 1 U.S. health insurer, said earnings surged 53 percent as it countered soaring medical costs with higher premiums.
- Travelers Property Casualty reported a large quarterly loss as the insurer takes a previously announced charge for paying asbestos claims against clients
- Fiber-optics maker Corning posted a fourth-quarter loss of \$709 million to end what company officials called "a difficult and disappointing year."
- Starbucks, the world's largest specialty coffee retailer, said first-quarter earnings rose 17 percent, fueled by strong holiday sales, and it raised its forecast for full-year earnings.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:26PM

Sentencing delayed on partnership tax charges

By TOM FOWLER and MARY FLOOD

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The sentencing of a former Enron Corp. employee who pleaded guilty to tax-related charges has been delayed more than five months to Aug. 4.

Lawrence Lawyer, a former midlevel finance employee at Enron, admitted in November that he failed to report to the Internal Revenue Service \$79,468.83 in income he received for his work on the controversial RADR partnership. He agreed to pay the back taxes, donate the money he made to an ex-Enron employee support fund and cooperate with investigators as they build cases against others in the company.

Lawyer's sentencing was set for late February but earlier this month was rescheduled to August. He could face up to three years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Lawyer held a variety of positions at Enron between 1996 and 2001, including one in the company's broadband unit.

In 1997, while an employee of Enron Capital Management, Lawyer was asked by former finance executive Michael Kopper to help create the RADR partnership -- a deal that was a part of Kopper's guilty plea made in August and is mentioned in the October indictment of former Chief Financial Officer Andrew Fastow.

RADR was formed shortly after Enron decided it needed to sell a number of California wind farms it had acquired. The wind farms lost their appeal because the company was about to buy Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Ore. That acquisition would have made Enron's wind farms ineligible for guaranteed prices on the electricity produced.

Lawyer and his family received several checks over several years for the work on RADR, which he said Kopper told him to consider as "gifts." He failed to report the proceeds on his taxes, according to prosecutors.

Lawyer is the fourth person involved in questionable Enron-related transactions to plead guilty, following in the footsteps of former Arthur Andersen auditor David Duncan, Kopper and former Enron energy trader Timothy Belden. Sentencing for Duncan and Kopper has been rescheduled several times,

with the most recent dates falling in May for Duncan and July for Kopper. A sentencing date for Belden has not been set.

The sentencing delays are an indication that prosecutors will continue to need their cooperation for many months to come as the investigation stretches into its second year.

Among the pending developments in the criminal investigation is a superseding indictment against Fastow. Under the superseding indictment, which is expected before a Feb. 10 scheduling conference, he may see more charges added, other defendants added, or both.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:13PM

Williams says it's \$1.6 billion cash-rich

Bloomberg Business News

TULSA -- Williams Cos., a Tulsa-based pipeline owner with \$2 billion in debt payments due this year, said Thursday it had \$1.6 billion in cash and unused bank lines after reducing debt by \$600 million in the fourth quarter.

The second-largest U.S. owner of natural gas pipelines had \$1.1 billion in cash and almost \$500 million in available credit lines from banks, Williams said in a statement. Its debt dropped to \$14 billion at the end of 2002, from \$14.6 billion at the end of September.

Williams has been shrinking its energy-trading business, which had \$602 million in losses during the first nine months of 2002. Excluding trading, the company earned \$1.4 billion to \$1.5 billion last year from gas pipelines, oil and natural gas production, gas liquids, and storage businesses, Williams said.

The company "didn't announce the most important number, which is what their marketing and trading business did last quarter," said Credit Lyonnais Securities analyst Gordon Howald, who rates Williams a "buy" and owns no shares. "But if you look at earnings from their physical assets, they're shoving along pretty well."

Shares of Williams rose 47 cents, or 15 percent, to \$3.64 in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. It was the biggest one-day gain since Dec. 31. The stock had fallen 22 percent in the previous two sessions and is down 85 percent from a year ago.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:17PM

Wal-Mart's distributor could help online music

New York Times

LOS ANGELES -- In a move that could make it easier for record labels to widely sell songs online, the music distributor for Wal-Mart has agreed to buy some of the assets of Liquid Audio, the troubled digital music pioneer.

Anderson Merchandisers, a privately owned company that is also the largest magazine wholesaler in the United States, is buying Liquid Audio's technology as well as other assets, including computers, for an undisclosed sum, according to company executives.

Liquid Audio was at the forefront in developing technology to deliver music securely online but has been mired in financial straits recently and has suffered through a nasty boardroom fight.

The new company, which has not been named, will be run by a Liquid Audio co-founder, Gerry Kearby, who said the company had licenses to distribute more than 350,000 songs.

The acquisition, which is expected to be announced today, signals that recording companies, distributors and retailers are taking the first steps toward working together to come up with new ways to combat declining music sales, which have been hurt by free online music-swapping.

Knoxville, Tenn.-based Anderson hopes to distribute music through the Web sites of retailers, including Wal-Mart, although no deal has been worked out yet.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:39PM

Supporters praise speed of new wireless technology

Washington Post

WHIPPANY, N.J. -- Inside a white van decked out with computer screens on the back of each seat, two Lucent Technologies technicians eagerly put their company's new wireless data network through its paces.

As the van rolls around a parking lot, one techie taps at a keyboard and the screens jump from one Web site to another. Even the pages full of connection-clogging photos and graphics pop up at a speed rivaling any desktop computer tethered to the Internet by a cable or a telephone line.

For a grand finale, one of the technicians tunes into CNBC via the Internet. A dial-up connection would produce herky-jerky pictures and tinny sounds, but here the financial news channel comes in loud and clear.

The technology, known as EvDO, for Evolution Data Only, provides wireless data connections that are 10 times as fast as a regular modem. Proponents say EvDO offers huge advantages over WiFi, a wireless data technology that's popping up around the country in hotel lobbies and coffee shops, and that it may even be the long-sought path around local telephone and cable companies' lock on the high-speed Internet market in most residential areas.

But after learning some hard lessons in the last few years, the U.S. wireless industry is skittish about investing heavily in anything that doesn't have immediate promise of improving its bottom line.

EvDO would require wireless companies to spend billions on additional spectrum and new software for every cell tower in their networks. The industry is still smarting from the failure of other once-promising wireless technologies.

Despite the expense and concerns about demand for EvDO, it's already gaining a toehold in other countries and some small U.S. cities.

In addition to being far faster than WiFi, EvDO can work over existing cell phone networks and deliver a connection anywhere there's a mobile phone signal.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:25PM

Local earnings

Cooper Industries reported that the fourth quarter included a charge equal to 32 cents per share, mostly related to severance costs and the closing of 10 plants. Free cash flow for the year reached a record \$428 million. Qtr. to Dec. 31 2002 2001

Revenues 985,000,000 989,600,000

Net income 27,800,000 32,600,000

Per share (basic) 0.30 0.35

Per share (diluted) 0.30 0.34

Full year 2002 2001

Revenues 3,960,500,000 4,209,500,000

Net income 213,700,000 231,300,000

Per share (basic) 2.29 2.46

Per share (diluted) 2.28 2.44

Cooper Industries is a global manufacturer of electrical products, tools and hardware.

Enbridge Energy Partners said it had raised its quarterly cash distribution to unit holders by 2.5 cents per unit to 92.5 cents, or by 10 cents per unit to \$3.70 annually. The increase, equal to 2.8 percent, is effective with the next distribution to be paid on Feb. 14, to unit holders of record Feb. 4. Qtr. to Dec. 31 2002 2001

Revenues 542,900,000 112,000,000

Net income 26,000,000 10,600,000

Per unit 0.52 0.26

Full year 2002 2001

Revenues 1,185,500,000 342,300,000

Net income 78,100,000 38,900,000

Per unit 1.76 0.98

Enbridge Energy Partners owns the U.S. portion of the world's longest liquid petroleum pipeline.

Southwest Bancorporation of Texas saw its revenues drop 3.3 percent in 2002 compared with what it collected in 2001 but boosted its profits 12.3 percent in part because of record-setting growth of its deposits and loans.Qtr. to Dec. 31 2002 2001

Revenues 79,651,000 76,190,000

Net income 15,917,000 13,986,000

Per share (basic) 0.47 0.42

Per share (diluted) 0.46 0.41

Full year 2002 2001

Revenues 308,806,000 319,305,000

Net income 59,206,000 52,717,000

Per share (basic) 1.77 1.60

Per share (diluted) 1.72 1.55

(Revenues are the total of interest income and noninterest income.) Southwest Bancorporation of Texas is the Houston-based parent company of Southwest Bank of Texas.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:12PM

Bulletin board

HARDWARE

ALL-IN-WONDER VE -- \$129, ATI TECHNOLOGIES. A lot of budget-conscious computer users get frustrated when they decide they want to upgrade their PCs' graphics. Many low-cost PCs have graphics systems that are built into the main system board and lack an AGP slot, the traditional way modern video cards are added to a computer. You can add a card using a PCI slot, but the connection is not as zippy as AGP. A lot of card manufacturers concentrate on selling to the AGP market, leaving those who need to upgrade via PCI in the lurch. ATI has addressed this issue with a low-cost version of its All-in-Wonder cards that includes both a TV tuner and quality 3-D graphics. The All-in-Wonder VE is built on the ATI Radeon 7500 chip, which is about two generations old, but includes features found in ATI's Radeon 8500 and 9700 All-in-Wonder cards. The tuner here will do "TV on Demand," which lets you record and pause live television. You can use the included GemStar programming guide for indicating which shows you want to record -- just click the program on the listings grid. The card allows you to capture analog video and comes with a "lite" version of Pinnacle Studio 8 software for editing movies. The card comes with 64 megabytes of double-data-rate memory, which is enough video RAM for most modern games. The card will work with computers as old as a Pentium II running Windows 98, although some features won't be available on older computers.

Compiled from staff reviews

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:14PM

DR. MAC

Safari may indeed be best Mac browser ever

By BOB LEVITUS

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IT'S Apple software that really distinguishes Macs from PCs, and Apple introduced a bunch of it at Macworld Expo earlier this month.

First there's Safari, Apple's new Web browser. The Apple hype machine crows: "It's the fastest and easiest to use Web browser ever created for the Mac." "Its highly tuned rendering engine loads pages over three times faster than Microsoft's Internet Explorer for the Mac." "It runs Javascript over twice as fast." Steve Jobs modestly predicts that "many will feel it is the best browser ever created."

It would make me sick if it weren't mostly true. Safari is wicked fast, with a clean, uncluttered interface and a feature I love -- a special field in its toolbar that lets you search the Web via Google without going to the Google Web page first.

I've been using Safari for several weeks, and even though it's still in beta, it has become my browser of choice. It is much faster than the others, and it may very well be the best browser ever created. Not bad for a program that's not even done yet.

Join more than 1 million other Mac users and download the beta. It's at www.apple.com/safari.

Moving right along, I've seen a lot of Steve Jobs keynote performances at various Macworld Expos, and I've always been impressed by the stuff Steve shows on the big screens. I always figured he had a room full of graphic artists, QuickTime engineers and video gurus working around the clock, but I was way wrong.

It turns out that Jobs has been using the ever-so-appropriately named Keynote, Apple's just-released \$99 presentation program. Keynote is reminiscent of PowerPoint, but with that slick Apple interface. And since it takes advantage of cool OS X technologies like Quartz, QuickTime and OpenGL, it has superb typography, Photoshop-like image resizing, and high-quality transitions. Plus, it includes 12 Apple-designed themes, and just like the themes you get with iDVD, the Keynote themes are gorgeous.

When I got my copy, I went back to my hotel that night and created a slide show for the Dr. Mac's 2002

Shareware, Freeware and Otherware Awards I was hosting later that week. I spent less than 90 minutes on it, and, ignoring my own advice, I didn't even glance at the manual.

It came out great. And since Keynote allowed me to export it as a QuickTime movie, you can see it for yourself at homepage.mac.com/boblevitus/iMovieTheater9.html.

Two other software announcements capped off Jobs' keynote.

First, Final Cut Express, a new and less expensive program for editing video. Based on Apple's award-winning Final Cut Pro software, priced at \$999, Express leaves out some of the pro features most people would never use and costs just \$299.

The last software announcement concerns something old, iTunes, iMovie, iPhoto and iDVD, and something new, the name you call them. Forget about iApps or the Digital Hub. From here on out they're to be addressed as iLife.

Steve Jobs says that "iLife does for our digital lifestyle what Microsoft Office did for office productivity. Apple is far ahead of its PC competitors in offering the best-in-class applications for digital music, photography, moviemaking and DVD creation; and now they all work together seamlessly."

You can say that again.

The iLife applications are free with new Macs. Beginning today, iPhoto 2 and iMovie 3 will be available for free download at www.apple.com. The iLife retail package, with all four applications, will be \$49.

Alas, iDVD 3 still requires an internal Apple SuperDrive.

Bob LeVitus is a leading authority on Mac OS and the author of 41 books, including Mac OS X For Dummies 2nd Edition and The Little iTunes Book 2nd Edition. E-mail comments to doctormac@boblevitus.com.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:26AM

Briefs: Nation and world

Mortgage rates down after two-week rise

WASHINGTON -- Mortgage rates, which had been creeping higher for two weeks, retreated this week, with 30-year mortgages dipping close to the recent lows, reflecting market concerns about the economy and a possible war in Iraq.

The average interest rate on a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage dropped to 5.91 percent for this week, down from 5.97 percent last week, Freddie Mac reported Thursday in its latest nationwide survey of rates.

For 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, rates fell this week to 5.31 percent, compared with 5.36 percent last week. Rates were also down on one-year adjustable rate mortgages, which dropped to 3.93 percent, down from 4.03 percent.

Seven-day yield up for money funds

The seven-day average yield on money market mutual funds fell in the week ended Tuesday to 0.82 percent from 0.84 percent the previous week, said Money Fund Report.

The 30-day average yield fell to 0.85 percent from 0.87 percent. The seven-day compounded yield fell to 0.82 percent from 0.84 percent the previous week, and the 30-day compounded yield fell to 0.85 percent from 0.87 percent. The average maturity of the portfolios held by money funds was 51 days, down from 52 days.

30 days now required on 401(k) changes

WASHINGTON -- Starting next week, about 40 million Americans invested in 401(k) plans must get 30 days' notice when their employers want to block access to the accounts for administrative changes.

The post-Enron regulation, issued by the Labor Department on Thursday, was required as part of a new law enacted last summer to deal with a wave of corporate accounting scandals.

Failure to provide the 30-day notice is a fine up to \$100 per day per plan participant.

In other news ...

- The nearly yearlong investigation into trading activity by **Martha Stewart** is coming to a head, the Wall Street Journal reported today. Federal investigators have signaled their intention to interview more witnesses at **Merrill Lynch & Co.** over Stewart's sale of nearly 4,000 shares of **ImClone Systems** stock in December 2001, just before the company released some negative news about its cancer drug.
- **Kmart** intends to file a plan in bankruptcy court as early as today that shows how it will divide equity among its creditors. Current shareholders would get little, if anything.
- **Cisco Systems** sued **Huawei Technologies**, one of China's largest makers of telecommunications equipment, for allegedly copying aspects of Cisco routers and switches without permission.
- The **California Independent System Operator** approved a plan to impose steeper penalties on power suppliers that manipulate energy markets to boost revenues. The rules must be approved the **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission**.
- The president and CEO of communications chip-maker **Broadcom** announced his resignation as the company posted a fourth-quarter loss approaching \$2 billion. Henry T. Nicholas III said he needed time to deal with his divorce.
- **Tsingtao Brewery**, China's largest beer maker, said shareholders approved the sale to **Anheuser-Busch** of \$182 million worth of bonds convertible into shares. Anheuser-Busch's Tsingtao stake will rise to 27 percent from 4.5 percent, making it the second-largest shareholder.
- A second bidder has emerged for bankrupt **National Steel Corp.**, with **AK Steel Corp.** offering \$825 million cash for the company, two weeks after a slightly smaller bid by rival **U.S. Steel Corp.**
- The price of gold surged to a six-year high, propelled by fears of a showdown with Iraq and the weakness of stocks and the U.S. dollar. Gold rose \$4.80 to settle at \$364.50 per troy ounce in New York.
- U.S. and Mexican officials have an agreement to reimpose trade tariffs on U.S. chicken legs, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said. Mexico would allow in 55,000 tons of U.S. chicken-leg quarters duty free for the next six months. If chicken-leg exports exceed that level, exporters will have to pay a 98.8 percent temporary tariff -- the same level the tariffs were at in 2001. All other U.S. poultry exports can enter Mexico duty free.

Bloomberg News, Reuters, the Associated Press and Chronicle staff contribute to this report.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:24AM

Briefs: Houston and state

New leader at Aim from sister division

Aim Management Group is now led by Mark Williamson, the former head of the company's sister subsidiary, Invesco Funds Group in Denver.

Both are owned by London-based parent corporation Amvescap.

On Jan. 1., Williamson took on the jobs of president, chief executive officer and director of Amvescap's Aim division, which has its headquarters in Houston.

He replaces Bob Graham, who retains his position as chairman of the Aim division.

Graham had been CEO and president since 1997 and became chairman in 2000.

Williamson joined Amvescap in 1998 after an investment management career with NationsBank. He graduated from the University of Florida in 1973.

Grocery distributor posts quarterly loss

LEWISVILLE -- Fleming Cos., the top U.S. grocery distributor, Thursday reported a fourth-quarter loss and said it may end its supply pact with bankrupt customer Kmart Corp. unless it can negotiate more favorable terms.

Even though Kmart accounted for about 20 percent of Fleming's sales in the third quarter, analysts said the discounter's low-margin business and reduced volume would not shield Lewisville-based Fleming from weakening profitability even if it opts to keep Kmart as a customer.

Fleming shares, which have been at 30-year lows since September on mounting worries about business prospects and the Kmart fallout, closed down 36 cents at \$4.11 Thursday.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:25PM

Ex-inspector questions timing of arrest reports

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. -- Former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter, a harsh critic of the Bush administration's push toward war with Iraq, suggested that recent news reports of his arrest in an Internet sex sting last year were part of an attempt to silence him.

He said the publicity forced him to cancel a trip to Baghdad, where he said he would have offered an alternative to military action.

"The timing does stink. I was supposed to be on an airplane yesterday to Baghdad," he said. "Let's not forget, we're on the verge of a major conflict in which thousands of American lives may be lost, and I was a leading voice of opposition to this."

"It's a shame that somebody would bring up this old matter, this dismissed matter, and seek to silence me at this time," he said.

Ritter, 41, acknowledged his June 2001 arrest in appearances on CNN and Court TV on Wednesday night but said he was prohibited from discussing details because the charges were dismissed and the records sealed.

Broadcast reports at the time and recent newspaper reports have indicated he was caught in an Internet sex sting, something Ritter did not admit.

At the time of the arrest, NBC station WNYT-TV of Albany reported that William Scott Ritter Jr. -- Ritter's full name -- was charged with trying to lure a 16-year-old girl to a restaurant. The girl turned out to be an undercover police officer.

WNYT broadcast Ritter's mug shot provided by the police but did not make the connection to his role as the chief U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq during most of the 1990s.

He was charged with attempted endangerment of a child, a misdemeanor that carries up to 90 days in jail, according to the Times Union of Albany. The case was adjourned in contemplation of dismissal, meaning if he stayed out of trouble for six months, the charges would disappear and the file be sealed.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:59PM

\$390 billion spending bill approved

Senate Republicans battle, juggle to stay under president's price tag

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The Senate approved a massive \$390 billion measure Thursday financing most federal agencies, blessing the long-delayed last chunk of this year's budget that stalled last fall in an election-season standoff with President Bush over spending.

The bill's 69-29 passage ended the first prolonged battle this year in the new Senate. The winners were the chamber's majority Republicans, who battled -- and sometimes used budget sleight of hand -- to keep the price tag within limits Bush demanded.

Passage set the stage for what could be prolonged negotiations with the House before a final measure can be sent to Bush for his signature.

White House budget chief Mitchell Daniels, a frequent sparring partner with Congress in disputes over spending, lauded the Senate for moving closer to finishing this year's budget in what he said was a fiscally prudent way.

"They have successfully joined with the president in saving taxpayers billions in unnecessary spending," Daniels said.

Bush and Republicans said the bill reflects diminished resources caused by revived deficits and the need to focus on fighting terrorism and restoring the economy. Democrats said the wide-ranging bill shortchanges everything from hiring food inspectors to helping low-income school districts.

"They once again have failed to address some really critical areas: hospitals, education, homeland security," Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., said of Republicans.

The measure is a collection of 11 bills financing every agency except the Pentagon for the budget year that started Oct. 1 and is now nearly one-third over. Last year, Bush demanded lower spending than Democrats and some Republicans wanted, and House GOP leaders chose to avoid a potentially embarrassing campaign-season defeat for Bush by shelving work on the legislation.

The Defense Department's budget was enacted last fall.

The sixth day of debate saw Democrats once again try and fail to boost spending for several programs, proposals that even in defeat would draw political distinctions between them and the GOP.

Even before the final piles of amendments were approved, the bill was loaded with hundreds of projects for lawmakers' states totaling billions of dollars.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., lost efforts to delete two such items: water projects in Devil's Lake, N.D., and the Yazoo pump project in central Mississippi.

During the six days of debate, when GOP leaders realized they could not defeat some Democratic amendments, they figured out creative ways to accommodate them within the \$390 billion price tag that Bush supports.

They shoehorned in \$120 million Thursday for community health programs but said the bill's cost would not grow. That is because budget analysts reclassified money in the measure for farmers and Medicare providers as a category of spending that is counted apart from the bill's overall price tag, aides said, freeing up room for added spending.

Wednesday night, they included an extra \$1.5 billion for education for disabled children. But it won't count against the bill's cost because the money is for fiscal 2004, which starts next Oct. 1.

Senate completion would set up bargaining with the Republican-led House for a compromise package that leaders hope to send Bush by early February.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:54PM

FDA cites rare dangers of popular asthma drug

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The Food and Drug Administration warned Thursday that some patients using a popular asthma medication are more likely to face life-threatening complications and more likely to die from their symptoms than those who are not taking the drug.

Officials emphasized that problems from the drug Serevent were rare, and they said the drug's benefits outweigh the risks. They cautioned that it is dangerous to abruptly stop taking the drug and recommended that concerned patients talk with their doctors.

Serevent, an aerosol spray made by GlaxoSmithKline, opens the airways to help asthma patients breathe more easily. Patients use it twice a day to prevent attacks.

Due to concerns about the drug, Glaxo launched a large study to compare the number of life-threatening experiences, such as intubations and mechanical ventilation, and the number of asthma-related deaths in patients taking the drug vs. the number of such occurrences in patients given a placebo.

The study found a greater risk of problems and a greater risk of death among black patients, and found a disparity in deaths among those who were not using a companion drug aimed at controlling inflammation.

The company and the FDA are emphasizing existing guidelines that say patients whose asthma is severe enough to require daily medication should also be using inhaled corticosteroids which control inflammation.

Jan. 23, 2003, 9:10PM

Bush remains popular in polls, but economy, Iraq spur doubts

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Doubts are growing about President Bush's handling of the economy and Iraq, though Americans support his campaign against terror and he remains personally popular, polls suggest.

The public's bond with the president, forged after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, offer him opportunities to bolster his standing in the polls during Tuesday's State of the Union address, pollsters say.

"The president has an opportunity to do two things that are necessary for the well-being of his administration," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

"One is to make the case on Iraq -- where he needs help because support levels are slipping," he said. "It also would be good for him to improve confidence in the American public about the future direction of the economy and his stewardship of the economy."

Bush's job approval was at 58 percent in the Pew poll and 54 percent in a new NBC-Wall Street Journal poll, both released Thursday.

Several other polls have shown Bush's approval rating in the 50s, still relatively healthy but down from the 90 percent levels it reached after the Sept. 11. attacks.

The president has almost unanimous support among Republicans, about nine in 10 in the Pew poll,

Bush's approval rating contrasts with growing fears about the economy, said Frank Newport, editor in chief of the Gallup Poll.

"His average approval last year was in the 70s," Newport said. "Looking at these ratings, it is a drop, but look at the average ratings for president" which are in the mid-50s.

Newport said Bush could be seen as facing difficulty if his approval rating drops to 29 percent, like his father's did at the low point in the summer of 1992.

The public has grown increasingly skeptical about Bush's handling of the economy, with 44 percent

approving of his economic stewardship and 49 percent disapproving in the NBC-WSJ poll.

In the Pew poll, people were evenly split on his handling of the economy with 47 percent approving and 45 percent disapproving.

The NBC-WSJ poll of 1,025 adults was taken Jan. 19-21 while the Pew poll of 1,218 adults was taken Jan. 8-12. Both had error margins of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:53PM

Kerry critical of Bush's 'rush to war'

But senator, presidential candidate voices support for disarming Iraq

By DAVID VON DREHLE
Washington Post

WASHINGTON -- Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., charged Thursday that the Bush administration is on a "rush to war" in Iraq that will endanger U.S. alliances and fan anti-Americanism "around the world."

At the same time, the Democratic presidential candidate repeated his belief that Saddam Hussein "presents a particularly grievous threat" to the United States because of his long record of dangerous missteps in a volatile region. The Iraqi leader could be confronted more effectively, Kerry said, if White House would "do the hard work" of explaining the threat and of building a coalition to invade Iraq, if that proves necessary.

But he didn't go so far as saying the United Nations must approve an invasion. "My support is not contingent" on a new Security Council resolution, Kerry said, "but it would be better."

By embracing the goal of disarming Iraq while sharply criticizing the administration's tactics, Kerry continued his efforts to steer a middle course at a time when pacifist voices are on the rise in his party.

Amid oratory blasting "the Bush administration's blustering unilateralism," Kerry also included a rebuke for "those who reflexively oppose any U.S. military intervention anywhere."

But during the question period after his speech at Georgetown University, Kerry learned what a fine line he'll be walking.

A student assailed him for voting in favor of a congressional resolution last fall authorizing President Bush to use force in Iraq. Kerry, a decorated Vietnam War veteran who returned to lead antiwar protests a generation ago, extolled the "voices of dissent" heard at recent peace demonstrations. But he added that those who see no need to enforce U.N. resolutions to disarm Iraq probably shouldn't vote for him.

Kerry is one of six declared candidates for the Democratic nomination in 2004. In this speech, he staked out foreign policy ground previously occupied by former Vice President Al Gore.

In a speech last February in New York, Gore struck most of the same themes Kerry sounded Thursday:

the menace of Saddam, the need for cultivating alliances, the importance of U.S. leadership to address global warming and the AIDS crisis in Africa.

The two even shared the same metaphor: that poverty and oppression in the Middle East are the stream supplying the "swamp" of terrorists.

As Kerry put it: "We must drain the swamps of terrorists; but you don't have a prayer of doing so if you leave the poisoned sources to gather and flow again. That means we must help the vast majority people of the greater Middle East build a better future."

He said that "a combination of harsh political oppression, economic stagnation, lack of education and opportunity, and rapid population growth has proven simply explosive," and so steps must be taken to increase trade with the Arab world. "The Bush administration has a plan for waging war," he said, "but no plan for winning the peace."

Kerry mocked the administration's dealings with North Korea as "a merry-go-round policy: They got up on their high horse, whooped and hollered, rode around in circles, and ended up right back where they'd started in the first place."

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:49PM

Clinton rips Bush plans for tax cuts, health care

By **AMY GOLDSTEIN**
Washington Post

WASHINGTON -- Former President Clinton Thursday assailed his successor's domestic priorities, saying the Bush administration's eagerness for tax cuts is rendering the government unable to address fundamental shortcomings in the nation's health care system, including the 41 million people who are uninsured.

In his first major speech on health policy -- a signature issue of his presidency -- since he left the White House two years ago this week, Clinton said that President Bush has promoted tax reductions for the wealthy while depriving states, small businesses and working families of money to expand health coverage.

"You are having a conversation about air if you don't have any money," Clinton told an audience of liberal health care activists. He criticized the main device the administration has proposed to increase coverage -- tax credits for people to buy insurance policies on their own -- saying that such credits would not give enough financial help.

Clinton was one of two influential Democrats who sought Thursday to draw attention to health care problems, less than a week before Bush is to lay out his agenda for the year in his State of the Union address.

"The health care system in the country is in a real crisis," Sen. John Breaux, D-La., told the U.S. Conference of Mayors. He pointed out that the price of insurance premiums is rising far more quickly than overall inflation, more Americans are becoming uninsured, and fewer small business are offering workers coverage.

The prescription Breaux outlined went considerably beyond Clinton's advice. The senator advanced a new proposal for making sure that everyone in the country has basic health insurance, saying that such a system would be akin to laws that require drivers to carry auto insurance.

Under Breaux's proposal, people with incomes of 150 percent of the federal poverty level or less would not have to pay for insurance, while the government would give partial subsidies to incomes up to 250 percent of the poverty level. The government would create a method to try to ensure that employers do not drop any coverage they already provide, and states would be encouraged to form purchasing pools so individuals could obtain insurance at a reasonable price.

Breaux acknowledged that his proposal faces difficult prospects. "Is it going to pass this year? The answer is no. But let the debate begin."

In their remarks, Breaux and Clinton each noted that the U.S. spends more on health care than other nations while access to that care remains uneven.

The changes Clinton recommended are more gradual than the comprehensive revision of the health care system that he proposed in 1993, and that Congress rejected the following year. Thursday, he called for the government to shore up Medicaid, the public insurance program for the poor, particularly because many states are facing historic financial strains.

He revived an idea he promoted toward the end of his presidency: allowing some parents to obtain coverage through a Children's Health Insurance Program that Clinton helped to create. And he said the medical malpractice system could use improvement, although he said its problems are not as severe as Bush contends.

Clinton was harshest in his depiction of the \$1.3 trillion tax cut that Bush pushed through Congress in 2001 and the additional \$670 billion in cuts the president is proposing this year. Noting that the 2001 tax cuts have contributed to the resumption of federal deficits, he said, "The first thing you ought to do when you find yourself in a hole is quit digging. They are looking for a bigger shovel."

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:56PM

Bush will urge 11% increase in funding to safeguard food

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- President Bush will seek an 11 percent increase in the Agriculture Department's 2004 food safety budget to strengthen protections against harmful bacteria in food and increase security at laboratories, officials said Thursday.

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said the recommendation in the budget that Bush will send to Congress next month would be \$797 million. That's up \$81 million from the 2002 budget, and an increase of \$100 million, or 14 percent, over 2001. The 2003 budget proposal has yet to be approved by Congress.

Bush's recommendation "will further the USDA's efforts to protect consumers and the U.S. agricultural sector against threats, both intentional and unintentional," Veneman said Thursday at the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association's conference in Atlanta.

USDA inspectors will focus on testing more frequently for bacteria that can appear on meat and poultry, such as listeria and E. coli, she said.

Citing food-poisoning outbreaks that killed nine people last year, Veneman said: "Our goal is to reduce and eventually eliminate the need for recalls."

The proposed budget will also include \$70 million to increase security to guard against bioterrorism and the spread of pathogens, particularly at USDA laboratories where animal diseases, plant pests and vaccines are studied. It also would be spent on improving pest and disease monitoring.

There was no immediate response from members of Congress who oversee the department.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:57PM

How the money would be spent

Specifically, the recommendation includes giving:

- \$42 million more to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service to hire up to 70 more inspectors and train them and increase testing for E. coli and other pathogens. The agency now has 7,610 inspectors who check meat and poultry plants and products for bacteria that can cause food poisoning.
- \$23 million more to the department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which monitors animal and plant diseases and is part of the Department of Homeland Security.
- \$47 million more would go to USDA research agencies that study animal diseases and vaccines and pay for strengthening a federal and state government network to respond to bioterrorism and animal disease outbreaks.

Jan. 23, 2003, 9:17PM

Hatch to change rules to speed up judges' approval

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- With Republicans in charge and President Bush calling for quick action on his judicial choices, Senate Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch says he will make it harder for Democratic senators to block home state nominees for federal judgeships.

At issue is the so-called "blue slip" tradition, referring to blue-colored approval papers that senators are asked to submit on nominees to fill vacant federal judgeships in their state. For the last few years, both home-state senators had to submit a positive blue slip for a nominee to be even considered by the Judiciary Committee.

But Republicans now fear Democratic senators will use negative blue slips to block Bush nominees. There are Democratic senators in 31 states who could end a nominee's chance by just submitting a negative form.

Under Hatch's plan, a single negative blue slip from a senator won't be enough to stop a Bush nominee, something that former Democratic Judiciary Chairmen Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Joseph Biden of Delaware did as well. Fourteen states have sent one Democrat each to the Senate.

"I'll give great weight to negative blue slips, but you can't have one senator holding up, for instance, circuit nominees," said Hatch, R-Utah.

"We're going to follow the Kennedy-Biden-Hatch policy, which basically says that blue slips will be given great weight but they're not dispositive. That's the way it should be," Hatch said.

Republicans are trying to move fast on Bush's nominees, scheduling votes and confirmation hearings for at least three Appeals Court nominees in the next two weeks. The first one expected to get a vote is Miguel Estrada, nominated for a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which has often been a stepping stone to a Supreme Court appointment.

Democrats, however, are expected to fight Hatch's proposal, which would limit them to filibusters if they want to block Bush nominations. Republicans hold a 50-48-1 advantage in the Senate, with independent Sen. Jim Jeffords of Vermont usually voting with the Democrats.

Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, the committee's top Democrat, said Hatch was changing his own

precedent.

"During the Clinton administration, he would not allow a nomination to move forward unless he had both blue slips," Leahy said. "To do differently during the Bush administration would be inconsistent."

Republican and Democratic senators have fought this battle before.

When Democrats controlled the Senate during the tenures of GOP Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush, they allowed judicial nominees to move forward if just one senator from a state submitted a positive blue slip.

After Republicans won control of the Senate in 1994, Democrats say Hatch refused to move a nomination from Democratic President Clinton unless he had positive blue slip approvals from both senators. Former Republican Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina used the tactic to block all of Clinton's court nominees from his state.

But in 2001, when George W. Bush took office, Hatch proposed dropping the requirement down to one blue slip. The suggestion so infuriated Democrats that they delayed nomination hearings for almost six months and even walked out on a Judiciary Committee voting session. That proposal became moot when Jeffords left the Republican Party and gave Democrats control of the Senate.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:48PM

Ex-GOP official indicted, accused of spying on Dems

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. -- The former executive director of Virginia's Republican Party was indicted Thursday on federal charges he eavesdropped on conference calls among Democratic legislators last year.

Edmund A. Matricardi III, 34, was accused of using a telephone number and access codes to listen in on the teleconferences.

He was charged with five counts involving the interception of electronic communications. Each count carries up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Matricardi resigned over the scandal but was later hired as operations director of the South Carolina Republican Party. Thursday, after he was indicted, he resigned that post, too.

His attorney, Steven Benjamin, criticized the timing of the indictment. He said he had asked prosecutors to hold off on any charges until after the Virginia General Assembly had adjourned Feb. 22. He said any legal proceedings would probably require legislators to testify.

Matricardi was indicted in April on state charges, but the charges were dropped when state and local authorities asked federal investigators to take over the case.

Prosecutors said Matricardi used his telephone at state GOP headquarters and a telephone number and access code he had been given by a former Democratic Party staffer to call into an interstate conference call of the Joint Democratic Caucus last March.

"Without disclosing he was on the line, he secretly listened for approximately 2 1/2 hours and recorded the call on a tape recorder," U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty said.

The indictment said Matricardi disclosed the contents of the call the next day to an official in the office of Republican Attorney General Jerry Kilgore, who alerted the Virginia State Police.

Two days later, Matricardi allegedly eavesdropped on an interstate conference call among state Democrats for about two hours.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:55PM

Senator to undergo open-heart surgery

Graham postpones presidential plans

Washington Post

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., will have open-heart surgery next month to replace a damaged heart valve, a procedure that will delay his anticipated announcement that he would run for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The surgery will be performed on Graham, 66, during the first week of February at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. He's expected to spend five to seven days there and probably will have to wait at least 10 days before he can return to the Senate part time. It will take up to six weeks to recover fully, after which, one of his physicians said, Graham will have no permanent heart damage.

Graham had intended to announce plans to run for the 2004 Democratic nomination on Feb. 3 in Tallahassee.

"That final step will now be held in abeyance until he has the surgery and he has a chance, as he put it, to assess both his personal and political state," said Paul Anderson, Graham's communications director.

Surgeons will replace a heart valve that's become encrusted with calcium. Graham was first alerted to the problem eight years ago, when doctors said it was a mild, but slowly deteriorating problem.

Since then, Graham has had periodic exams, but hasn't taken medication or had surgery to alleviate the condition. He recently experienced shortness of breath, and after undergoing tests earlier this week at the Bethesda hospital, doctors recommended aortic valve replacement.

"The week of Feb. 3, I'd rather be on an airplane on the way to Des Moines, Iowa," Graham said Thursday.

Jan. 23, 2003, 8:00PM

Children of single parents suffer more psychiatric woes, study says

Associated Press

Children growing up in single-parent families are twice as likely as their counterparts to develop serious psychiatric illnesses and addictions later in life, according to an important new study.

Researchers have for years debated whether children from broken homes bounce back or whether they are more likely than kids whose parents stay together to develop serious emotional problems.

Experts say the latest study, published this week in *The Lancet* medical journal, is important because of its unprecedented scale and follow-up -- it tracked about 1 million children for a decade, into their mid-20s.

The question of why and how those children end up with such problems remains unanswered. The study suggests that financial hardship may play a role, but other experts say the research also supports the view that quality of parenting could be a factor.

The study used the Swedish national registries, which cover almost the entire population and contain extensive socioeconomic and health information. Children were considered to be living in a single-parent household if they were living with the same single adult in both the 1985 and 1990 housing census. That could have been the result of divorce, separation, death of a parent, out of wedlock birth or guardianship.

About 60,000 were living with their mother and about 5,500 with their father. There were 921,257 living with both parents. The children were ages 6 to 18 at the start of the study, with half already in their teens.

The scientists found that children with single parents were twice as likely as the others to develop a psychiatric illness such as severe depression or schizophrenia, to kill themselves or attempt suicide, and to develop an alcohol-related disease.

Girls were three times more likely to become drug addicts if they lived with a sole parent, and boys were four times more likely.

The researchers concluded that financial hardship, which they defined as renting rather than owning a home and as being on welfare, made a big difference.

However, other experts questioned the financial influence and suggested that quality of parenting could also be a factor.

"It makes you think that what you're seeing is just the most dysfunctional families having these problems, rather than the low income. The money is really an indicator of something else," said Sara McLanahan, a professor of sociology at Princeton University, who was not involved in the study.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:48PM

National briefs

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Columbia crew members make flame balls in test

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. -- Space shuttle Columbia's astronauts created tiny, weak balls of flame Thursday in an experiment that could lead to better car engines.

They ignited hydrogen and methane fuel inside a sealed chamber, and set records for the weakest flame and leanest mixture ever burned in space or on Earth, said the lead scientist, Paul Ronney of the University of Southern California at Los Angeles.

The flames, about three-eighths of an inch in diameter, were too weak to be seen by the naked eye and had to be magnified through a video camera.

To get the astronauts in the mood, Mission Control piped up a recording of *Burning Down the House* by the Talking Heads.

By going to space and getting rid of gravity, scientists can get weak flames to burn longer and thus yield data of use to the auto industry. The goal is to design car engines that can burn fuel more efficiently and produce less pollution.

Two pilots apologize to Canadian families

BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La. -- Two U.S. pilots who mistakenly bombed Canadian troops in Afghanistan last year apologized to the families of the dead and wounded Thursday as a hearing that could lead to their court-martial drew to a close.

Maj. Harry Schmidt and Maj. William Umbach defended their actions on the night of April 17, 2002. The friendly-fire accident left four Canadian soldiers dead and eight wounded.

Schmidt and Umbach are charged with involuntary manslaughter, dereliction of duty and aggravated assault. They could get up to 64 years in a military prison if convicted.

Artificial heart placed in another patient

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- Surgeons have implanted a self-contained artificial heart in another critically ill patient, barely two weeks after such operations resumed following a long hiatus.

The 10-hour operation was performed Wednesday, bringing to three the number of people now living with AbioCor artificial hearts.

The Jewish Hospital said that the patient -- and another recipient, who received the softball-size device at the hospital on Jan. 7 -- were both in critical but stable condition. Neither was identified.

Government wants plant temporarily closed

OMAHA, Neb. -- The federal government moved to temporarily shut down a meatpacking plant for unsanitary conditions after an investigation that began when a subsidiary of the company was linked to an E. coli outbreak.

Nebraska Beef Ltd., which slaughters more than 2,000 cattle a day at the plant for shipping to supermarkets, is challenging the move in court.

A hearing was set for today.

2,000 wild birds perish after eating corn bait

WHITE, Ga. -- Up to 2,000 hawks, doves, ducks, geese and other birds within a half-mile of a Georgia farm died after feeding on corn that had been laced with insecticide and left out in the open as bait.

"Some birds were just feathers and skeletons and some birds were just alive and dying," said Sgt. Mitch Yeargin of the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division law enforcement branch.

Investigators believe the corn had been used as bait at the farm to get rid of nuisance wildlife. The investigators would not say what species of wildlife were targeted, and they said they have not established who put the corn out.

In Georgia, poisoning wildlife is punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine for each animal harmed.

No arrests had been made Thursday, and officials would not say who owned the farm.

Jan. 23, 2003, 9:16PM

Kuwaiti man admits shooting Americans

Two more suspects sought in ambush

Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY -- A Kuwaiti suspect who reportedly shared the beliefs of Osama bin Laden confessed Thursday to shooting two U.S. defense workers, the government said. Police searched for two more suspects.

Also Thursday, Kuwaitis and Americans remembered the man slain in Tuesday's attack and offered sympathy for the second man, who was wounded.

The Kuwaiti suspect was arrested in Saudi Arabia and deported, a statement said. The Interior Ministry identified him as Sami al-Mutairi, a 25-year-old civil servant, and said the weapon had been recovered at his workplace.

Al-Mutairi became a suspect "in the first hours after the crime was committed," the ministry statement said without elaboration. Saudi border guards arrested him early Wednesday.

"He confessed that he committed the crime of assassinating the American citizen and injuring another on Tuesday," the statement said.

"After he was extradited to Kuwaiti authorities, he was interrogated and he confessed he adopts the thought of al-Qaida organization," the statement said.

A Kuwaiti security officer said al-Mutairi "had partners, maybe two."

In Tuesday's attack, a gunman hiding behind a hedge ambushed a sport utility vehicle carrying the civilian contractors working for the U.S. military. The attack took place at a stoplight about three miles from the U.S. military's Camp Doha, which is 10 miles west of Kuwait City.

The shooting was the first assault on U.S. civilians in Kuwait and the third on Americans since October in the oil-rich emirate, where pro-American sentiment is usually strong. The United States led the coalition that forced Iraq to abandon its 1990-91 occupation of Kuwait. Thousands of U.S. troops are assembling in Kuwait ahead of a possible new war on neighboring Iraq.

The wounded man, David Caraway, was in stable condition at al-Razi hospital in Kuwait City. His co-worker Michael Rene Pouliot, 46, was killed. Both men worked for San Diego-based Tapestry Solutions, a software company.

Members of an organization representing the families of Kuwaitis killed during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 joined other Kuwaitis in a cold rainstorm to leave a wreath at the spot where the Americans were shot.

On Oct. 8, two Kuwaiti Muslim fundamentalists opened fire on Marines taking a break from war games on the island of Failaka, killing one and injuring another. Other Marines shot dead the assailants, who reportedly had links to the al-Qaida terror network blamed for the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:53AM

Palestinian gunmen kill 3 Israelis in West Bank

Associated Press

HEBRON, West Bank -- Palestinian gunmen opened fire Thursday on three Israelis walking near a settlement in the West Bank, killing all of them, witnesses and rescue officials said.

The militant Islamic Hamas group took responsibility, issuing a leaflet saying the shooting was retaliation for attacks by Israeli settlers and the military against Palestinians and their property in the city of Hebron, known as a Hamas stronghold.

The attack occurred at the Beit Haggai intersection near a settlement in the Hebron hills. It came just five days before Israelis vote for a new government.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is running for re-election with a policy of harsh military reprisals against Palestinians following violence, is favored over his dovish opponent, Amram Mitzna, who favors negotiations with the Palestinians.

In the past, Palestinian attacks on the eve of Israeli elections have helped hard-line parties such as Sharon's Likud, galvanizing Israeli fears of terror attacks and desires for reprisals.

About 450 Israeli settlers live in three enclaves in the middle of Hebron, making it a flashpoint for violence. Sharon has said Israel cannot give up the hotly disputed holy site in Hebron -- the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where the Bible says Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are buried. Mitzna favors withdrawal.

Israel TV reported that the three Israelis were the target of a Palestinian ambush. Large numbers of Israeli soldiers were searching the area, the report said.

Zvi Katsover, mayor of the nearby Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba, said that soldiers earlier were firing flares in the air to find armed Palestinians. "This was apparently the unit that was chasing the terrorists and engaged them, and the results are known," he told Israel TV.

Tensions have been high in Hebron since Nov. 16, when 12 Israeli soldiers and police officers were killed in an ambush. The attack prompted the Israeli army to take over the Palestinian-controlled section of the city. Last Friday, Palestinians shot and killed an Israeli settler in a house just outside Hebron.

Also Thursday, Israeli forces detained the wife of a jailed Palestinian radical accused of dispatching the

gunmen who assassinated an Israeli Cabinet minister, relatives said.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:17PM

Mobile terror camps train militants to use explosives

Recruits detail life in remote Afghan outposts

By KATHY GANNON

Associated Press

PUBBI, Pakistan -- A six-hour walk along a narrow path that runs like a seam through Afghanistan's Urgan mountains leads to a remote village near the Pakistani border. Grenades are lined up like sentries along a small patch of land. Nearby there is a pile of explosives.

Najibullah, a young Afghan, described the terrorist camp where he was given explosives training last month, even as U.S. special forces and helicopter gunships scoured the mountains of eastern Afghanistan searching for militants.

For the first time, recruits told the Associated Press about terror camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan and gave details of how they learned to carry out bomb attacks and suicide ambushes.

The camp he described near the village of Okai still operates, Najibullah, 23, said.

Most of those in charge were Arabs loyal to Osama bin Laden; those in training were Afghans, Pakistanis, some Southeast Asians and some Arabs, Najibullah said.

Some of the trainees belong to the Taliban, some to bin Laden's al-Qaida network. Najibullah, a follower of Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, said he was ready to die to help drive American and other troops from his country or bring down Hamid Karzai's pro-U.S. government.

"I went there to learn to kill the foreign troops in Afghanistan. We will drive them out because they are destroying our country," said the young Afghan, his beard a wispy collection of hairs.

The United Nations and intelligence officials have said there is a resurgence of terrorist training camps in the remote regions along both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border.

The U.S. military in Afghani-stan says it has reports of many small, mobile camps.

The camps now are revving back up after months of having to lower their activity because of the U.S.-led hunt for militants in the region, launched after the Taliban fell in December 2001.

Najibullah and another trainee, Mohammed Zahidullah, gave a rare look into the camps, which they say are producing fighters ready to carry out attacks -- in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere. "Anywhere where non-Muslims are attacking Muslims," Zahidullah, a Pakistani, said.

The camp near Okai, in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province, was small and could be easily moved, Najibullah said. Each "class" had fewer than 15 trainees, he said.

Col. Roger King, U.S. military spokesman at Bagram Air Base north of Kabul, said the mobile camps are "of interest to us." But "all the camps we have found so far have been abandoned."

Najibullah and Zahidullah, a member of Pakistan's banned Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militant group who trained in a camp 90 miles west of Islamabad, said they mostly learned about explosives.

"We weren't there to learn how to fire a Kalashnikov or rocket launcher. We already knew that," Najibullah said.

They learned how to devise an ambush and lay land mines, where to lie in wait for coalition soldiers, how much explosives to set and how to detonate them, when to hurl a grenade, when to clutch it to your body and blow yourself up with your victim.

Najibullah said he was prepared to carry out attacks, though he would not discuss specifics. "No one can stop us. We are not afraid of the B-52s," he said, referring to the bombers that pounded al-Qaida and Taliban hideouts in the Afghan mountains.

A former Taliban intelligence chief, Mullah Mohammed Khaksar, said recruitment for the camps began about four months ago.

"People who were 100 percent trustworthy were being sought," he said.

There are reports of a graduation last month from a training camp in eastern Afghanistan, "and they are the ones who are doing these terrorist attacks," Khaksar said.

Khaksar had contacted the United States in 1999 to seek American help in stopping the Taliban and renounced the religious movement after their collapse.

Arabs are apparently funding the training. The camps are run from Maruf in the Kandahar region to Kunar in northeastern Afghanistan. Several camps are in northwestern Pakistan, in the Bajour area and in Mansehra, 90 miles northwest of Islamabad.

Zahidullah, whose Lashkar-e-Tayyaba group was outlawed by President Pervez Musharraf, said he was trained at Balakot, near Mansehra.

"Musharraf can't stop us," Zahidullah said.

"No one can stop us. You should know we want to die for our religion, for our country, for our Afghan brothers."

Jan. 24, 2003, 2:12AM

Ivory Coast negotiators reach draft peace agreement in Paris

Associated Press

PARIS -- Ivory Coast negotiators trying to end a civil war that erupted last year have reached a draft peace settlement, Prime Minister Affi Nguessan said today.

He did not give details of the agreement but confirmed that it had been reached during peace talks outside Paris.

The accord comes just hours after Ivory Coast's defense minister demanded that France enter full-force into the war bloodying its former West African colony

Defense Minister Bertin Kadet claimed Ivory Coast had come under attack from neighboring Liberia and France was obligated by treaty to defend it. The government says Liberians are fighting on the side of Ivory Coast's rebels.

Three rebel groups are fighting to oust President Laurent Gbagbo, who flew to Paris Thursday to participate in the talks.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:42PM

Koreas agree to seek peaceful end to nuclear standoff

But talks produce no concessions from North

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea agreed today to work with South Korea to peacefully resolve the international standoff over Pyongyang's nuclear programs as U.S. envoys stepped up diplomatic efforts elsewhere.

But after the two Koreas issued a joint statement pledging cooperation, the South Korean government acknowledged that the agreement fell short of commitments it sought from the North during the Cabinet-level talks.

In the declaration, the two sides said they had "sufficiently exchanged" positions on the nuclear issue and "agreed to actively cooperate to resolve this issue peacefully."

Meanwhile, a top American diplomat visited Tokyo to strengthen international support for putting the issue before the U.N. Security Council. The push comes as top officials in Washington say they detect a softening in North Korea's stance.

This week's Cabinet-level meetings in Seoul were the first in months between the Koreas, and South Korea promised to make them a forum for insisting that North Korea scrap nuclear programs that could make weapons.

The two sides agreed to hold the next round of talks April 7-10 in Pyongyang and another round of economic talks Feb. 11-14 in Seoul. Both sides also pledged to work toward reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, which has been divided since 1945.

In a separate statement, the South Korean negotiators said they had been unable to win any compromises from the North. The South had been pressing the North to state specific steps for settling the international standoff peacefully.

"Although we have not been able to draw out a more progressive position on North Korea's nuclear issue, we have sufficiently delivered our and the international community's concern on the nuclear issue," the

negotiators said.

The South Korean side also said it would work with Japan and the United States to resolve the issue peacefully.

The Cabinet-level meetings have been seen as a chance for South Korea to broker a solution. But North Korea has repeatedly said it will only deal directly with the United States.

Rhee Bong-jo, spokesman for the South Korean delegation, said this week's discussions could go only so far because the North largely stuck to that position.

At a dinner break late Thursday, South Korean delegation head Jeong Se-hyun urged the North to make a clear statement on the nuclear impasse.

"We must completely remove the security concerns which have been formed on the Korean Peninsula recently," Jeong said.

North Korean delegation leader Kim Ryong Song agreed it was vital to "prevent the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula and preserve the safety of the nation."

Separately, negotiators from both countries met Thursday in the North Korean capital to discuss completing railroad and road links. The projects stem from a North-South summit in June 2000.

North Korea is believed to already have produced two nuclear weapons, and experts say its complex at Yongbyon could produce several more within months.

Although the North says it has no such intention, it has quit a global nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

The North wants the United States to sign a nonaggression pact.

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage on Thursday ruled out any formal treaty but said in Moscow, "We're willing to document ... no hostile intent or so-called security guarantees for North Korea in some manner."

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of State John Bolton arrived in Tokyo, a day after saying he had the South's support and it was only "a matter of time" until the Security Council addressed the issue.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:48PM

World briefs

Impeachment begins for Paraguay leader

ASUNCION, Paraguay -- Paraguay's Congress began impeachment proceedings Thursday against unpopular President Luis Gonzalez Macchi, beset by corruption scandals in this poor, recession-hit South American nation. Gonzalez Macchi, in power since 1999, faces accusations of misappropriation of funds, fraud and the torture and kidnap of leftist militants, opposition lower house deputies said. The Senate trial is expected to take about two weeks.

Antiwar rally decries U.S., globalization

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil -- Anti-globalization activists banged drums, yelled antiwar slogans and danced the samba at the start of the World Social Forum on Thursday, the third annual summit of protests and talks on ways to limit the excesses of global capitalism. An estimated 30,000 to 40,000 red-shirted protesters gathered to open the event, waving banners decrying a possible U.S.-led war in Iraq and U.S. efforts to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas stretching from Alaska to Argentina by 2005.

Blast at army base kills 7, injures scores

LIMA, Peru -- A strong explosion at an ammunitions depot of an army base killed seven military personnel and injured scores of others Thursday in the city of Tumbes near Peru's northern border, officials said. "This regrettable accident has occurred for reasons we still do not know. There are seven dead and around 80 wounded," President Alejandro Toledo told Radio Programas del Peru from Davos, Switzerland, where he was attending the World Economic Forum.

Irish court upholds parental deportation

DUBLIN, Ireland -- Ireland can deport the immigrant parents of children born in the country, the Supreme Court ruled Thursday in a landmark judgment that raises fears for more than 10,000 families from Eastern Europe and Africa. The 5-2 verdict upheld a lower court's order that two families -- one Czech, the other Nigerian -- should be deported, even though both had a son born in Ireland in 2001. It was the first reversal of Ireland's unique practice of granting residency, often followed by citizenship, to anybody who has a baby in the European Union nation, even if they arrived illegally.

Security watchdog blasts U.S. snooping

VIENNA, Austria -- The media watchdog in Europe's leading security organization criticized the United States on Thursday for snooping on the private lives of Americans with a law passed in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Freimut Duve of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe condemned the FBI and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service for monitoring library records and bookstore receipts under the USA Patriot Act.

NATO to construct new headquarters

BRUSSELS, Belgium -- After more than three decades of living in temporary accommodations, NATO announced plans Thursday to build a new, futuristic headquarters in Brussels. The complex, chosen after a 14-month architectural competition, involves four wave-shaped, six-story blocks linked by a central hall.

Houston Chronicle News Services

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:35PM

Biggio's proposal weighed

Astros discuss contract extension after denying earlier request

By JOSE DE JESUS ORTIZ
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Astros owner Drayton McLane Jr. met with top team officials Thursday to discuss the pros and cons of giving veteran Craig Biggio a contract extension.

After already making two requests recently without receiving positive responses, Biggio's agent is withholding opinion until hearing the team's response. An answer may come as early as Tuesday.

"We gave them a proposal right after the winter meetings and before the Jeff Kent (signing)," said Barry Axelrod, Biggio's agent. "The only response we had was, 'No, thank you.' "

Kent signed with the Astros on Dec. 18, taking Biggio's spot at second base and moving the seven-time All-Star to the outfield for what will be the final year of his contract. Biggio has kept a low profile since Kent's signing, speaking only to the Chronicle on Dec. 18 when he said he was "fine" with a move to center field.

After Biggio's initial extension request was denied in December, Axelrod made another contract proposal "a week or 10 days ago."

"We made a subsequent proposal, and we haven't heard back from them," Axelrod said. "Hopefully, we'll make some progress when we hear something."

McLane said he didn't respond to the previous request because he wanted to speak with Biggio personally, and that two-hour meeting was held Wednesday.

Although Biggio, 37, would love to have a two-year extension, sources close to the situation say he isn't necessarily looking for one of that length. Both sides are considering several options, including a one-year extension with an option year that vests after some performance clauses are met.

McLane spent a major part of Thursday morning hearing opinions from Astros president of baseball operations Tal Smith, president of business operations Pam Gardner, general manager Gerry Hunsicker and assistant general manager Tim Purpura.

"We did begin to discuss Craig's situation and would expect to continue those discussions through the weekend and come to a resolution sometime next week," Hunsicker said.

The Astros are weighing several issues, including Biggio's age, his ability to play center field, his popularity, , the team's budget this season and beyond, and players who will hit free agency after this season.

Two-time Gold Glove catcher Brad Ausmus and righthander Shane Reynolds are two other free-agent concerns after this season.

If Wade Miller and Roy Oswalt continue their ascension into the top echelon of major-league pitchers, they will cash in with contracts worth at least \$2 million per year when they become arbitration-eligible next winter. Richard Hidalgo also will receive a huge pay increase to \$12 million in 2004.

Those budget issues are just some of the topics being weighed by the Astros. The real concerns being weighed Thursday were the 2004 and 2005 budgets.

"We had a good meeting, and I think we had additional insight into it," McLane said. "Part of it has to come from what we anticipate our revenues will be in 2004 and 2005 to offset an additional cost. That's why Pam Gardner was so important in that meeting."

Axelrod remains adamant that Biggio isn't seeking a rich contract similar to the three-year, \$28 million extension he signed after the 1999 season. A .288 career hitter, Biggio is set to earn \$8 million this year in the final season of the last extension. He also will be paid \$1 million of the \$7 million signing bonus he received with the extension. Even if he doesn't play for the Astros in 2004, he will get \$3 million as the remaining portion of the \$7 million bonus.

"There certainly is concern about a player who is 37 and 38," McLane said. "But we're trying to take into consideration more than just the statistics of his performance. We had a very good discussion."

McLane headed to Phoenix after meeting with his baseball circle, but he promises to continue discussing Biggio via telephone today and over the weekend.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:53AM

SMU steals win on Rice's court

After road wins, Owls fall down at home again

By **BRIAN McTAGGART**

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So much for defending the home court.

Coming off their first sweep of a road trip in the Western Athletic Conference, the Rice Owls suffered perhaps their most demoralizing defeat to date when SMU stole an 89-83 victory Thursday night at Autry Court.

The loss, the Owls' second in a row at home in conference, dropped Rice (11-5, 3-3 WAC) out of a tie for third place and into the middle of a cluttered pack in the WAC. SMU, which entered the game with a 1-7 record on the road, improved to 8-8 overall, 3-3 in league play.

"We started slow tonight, and we can't afford to start slow, and I thought that was a major factor in the outcome of the game," Rice coach Willis Wilson said. "They got ahead of us and put us in a situation where we were playing catch-up all night long. Every time we got back to where we needed to be, we emotionally or mentally had some slippage and didn't carry out our assignments."

SMU forward Quinton Ross, the WAC's leading scorer, poured in a game-high 27 points, hitting all 12 of his free throws. Freshman guard Bryan Hopkins was brilliant in scoring 21 points, including a clutch 3-pointer with 3:20 left in the game.

The Owls once again had too many breakdowns in transition and allowed the Mustangs to get easy looks at the basket, whether open jump shots or uncontested layups. SMU shot 54.4 percent from the field.

Michael Harris, who scored a career-high 24 points on 11-of-16 shooting, Omar-Seli Mance (23 points) and Jason McKrieth (16 points, eight assists) combined for 63 of Rice's 83 points, with Harris and Mance scoring 35 of the Owls' 40 second-half points.

"We can win like that -- we put 83 points on the board, which is well above our average," Wilson said. "The thing that we didn't do was defend. We got beat again in defensive transition, and that should never happen. I thought we would have learned our lesson from previous games."

The Mustangs led for most of the game before Mance made three 3-pointers in less than a three-minute span to put the Owls on top 66-64 with 7:08 left in the game. But SMU went on a 17-5 run to open up an insurmountable 81-71 lead with 2:05 left.

Rice trailed 45-43 after a lackluster first half, which wasn't all bad, considering SMU made its first 11 shots from the field and still couldn't pull away.

The Mustangs opened up a 49-43 lead two minutes into the second half before Harris carried the Owls over the next six minutes. He scored the Owls' next 12 points, capping the outburst with two consecutive dunks off nice feeds from McKrieth to cut the SMU lead to 59-57 with 11:07 remaining.

"I just felt I needed to come in and provide energy," Harris said. "In the first half, we weren't into the game as much as we should have been, and they had a lot of close shots. They were making a lot of shots early in the second half, so we had to pick up the intensity."

Hopkins answered by making a wide-open 3-pointer, but Mance scored his first points since early in the first half with back-to-back 3-pointers to put Rice ahead 63-62. Hopkins put the Mustangs ahead briefly with a layup, but Mance drained another trey to give Rice a 66-64 lead with 7:08 remaining.

Rice was within 74-71 after another 3-pointer by Mance with 3:37 left, but Hopkins answered with a clutch trey of his own to put the final dagger through the Owls' hearts. SMU hit all 10 of its free-throw attempts in the final 2:05 to keep the Owls at bay.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:23PM

River Oaks sets McEnroe exhibition

By MEGAN MANFULL

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After 69 years, the River Oaks International Tennis Tournament is shaking up its routine and creating what is anticipated to be an unpredictable week.

Organizers are in the final stages of securing tennis' former bad boy John McEnroe as their main attraction in the tournament's first-ever exhibition match April 3. The event will be in the middle of the seven-day tournament, which starts March 31.

McEnroe will spend April 3 at River Oaks Country Club, conduct a book signing and then show his trademark intensity on the court when he faces American James Blake or Xavier Malisse of Belgium. River Oaks hopes McEnroe's involvement attracts a new and larger crowd.

"There's a lot of interest in seeing McEnroe, one of the greatest players to ever play," tournament director Van Barry said. "It's something that's different. We're trying to have a little something for every type of sports fan."

The intensity for which McEnroe, 43, was known has hardly abated since he retired from the game in 1992. While negotiating McEnroe's schedule at River Oaks, organizers learned the legend had no intention of carelessly coasting through the event. McEnroe made it clear his schedule had to be cleared for the two hours before the match.

"He's very concerned with how he plays," Barry said. "He wants to make sure he has time to eat right, rest and warm up."

During McEnroe's career, he won 77 singles titles and seven Grand Slam events. He also has been a part of the River Oaks tournament before. In 1997, he reached the semifinals before losing to Alex O'Brien.

The details are being finalized, but River Oaks is confident everything will be settled in the next few days. The decision puts an end to the club's search for the perfect drawing card for the exhibition match. Barry was also in discussions with Anna Kournikova and Boris Becker.

But McEnroe's schedule worked out best.

"Everybody has an opinion about him, but no one questions his ability," Barry said. "He leaves it all on the court."

Jan. 23, 2003, 8:51PM

Bucs would do well to give Keyshawn free rein

By DALE ROBERTSON

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SAN DIEGO -- The image of Keyshawn Johnson that remains stuck in our heads, fiercely resisting all reprogramming efforts, is one of a self-centered, arrogant, overindulged, disagreeable, big-mouthed brat.

As a rookie for the New York Jets, he had the gall to write a book called *Just Throw Me the Damn Ball*, and we've been throwing brickbats his way ever since. But, upon further review, the Buccaneers' alleged *Maxi-Me* is getting a bad rap. Only one of the aforementioned charges would stick in a court of law.

"I am a talkative person," Keyshawn concedes.

But yes, he does want his Tampa Bay quarterback, Brad Johnson, to look his way Sunday. Lots of times, because he promises he will catch it. He also promises to do all the other little, blue-collar-type things to make the Buccaneers upset winners of Super Bowl XXXVII.

The Bucs don't have enough offensive weaponry for Keyshawn not to be highlighted in their game plan against the Raiders. He'll have to come up big in several ways, from making drive-sustaining receptions to clearing paths for Mike Alstott by obstructing Oakland's defensive ends.

Both roles, that of a limo-riding receiver and a lunch pail-toting blocker, jazz Keyshawn equally, and there's credible evidence to support his contention.

The Bucs are here, aren't they? Could they be here if Keyshawn was really a pain-in-the-neck personality?

"I don't showboat. I don't even dance when I score touchdowns," he points out. "I don't create problems. I'm not a guy who uses drugs. You never catch me in the paper doing anything I shouldn't be doing. (Tampa Bay general manager) Rich McKay is no dummy. He knows I'm no cancer."

It's common knowledge to anyone who follows football that the Bucs are run-challenged. They got to San Diego because their defense has overcompensated for the offense's limitations. The Philadelphia game proved a perfect case in point. Tampa Bay ran for only 49 yards, or 1.5 per carry. In a different system, with superior weapons in the huddle, Keyshawn could focus solely on being a fancy-pants playmaking receiver.

In this system, he knows he must do everything well, and dutifully, for Tampa Bay to move the chains.

"I couldn't care less what we're doing with the football as long as we're winning football games," Keyshawn said. "I'm going to get my fair share of catches. At the end of the year, I have always been, in terms of numbers, right there in the middle of the pack. The media thinks you have to have 100 catches, 14 touchdowns and 1,900 yards, but most of the time the guys who have those numbers are home. None of those guys are in the Super Bowl."

Two of the genre to which he refers are former Tampa Bay teammates and remain good friends. But Johnson says the Bucs survived their hostile Philadelphia incursion this year because of what Joe Jurevicius and Keenan McCardell brought to the mix that Warrick Dunn and Jacquez Green couldn't.

"My other two guys, God bless them, just didn't give us a whole lot (in Philly the last two years)," Keyshawn said. "Being able to match a guy like Joe up with a linebacker in a bunch formation, Joe's going to win that matchup every time. That's good game-planning. And you can't do that with a 5-8, 170-pound wide receiver, because the first thing the linebacker will do is knock the ... out of him as soon as he comes underneath."

"If the linebacker hits Joe, he won't pay him any attention. He'll just keep coming, and that's what happened in the Philadelphia game."

Jurevicius' 71-yard reception off just such a play is what launched the clipping of the Eagles' wings. And nobody was more thrilled for or laudatory of Jurevicius than Keyshawn. Just give *anybody* the damn ball, Johnson chirps these days, as long as it leads the Bucs to the promised land.

"I don't want to be the guy with 1,000 catches and no Super Bowl ring," he said. "No knock on Andre Reed, but that's not what I want to be. I don't want to go to four Super Bowls (like Reed) and not win and have people say, 'He was a great player.' That doesn't mean great to me."

"I don't consider myself great. I consider myself good. I consider Jerry Rice great. I consider Michael Irvin great. Those are the guys who have the jewelry."

Johnson's 76 receptions for 1,088 yards -- 14.3 per catch -- would indicate he hasn't been starved for attention. Considering how the Bucs have struggled at times to move the ball, those numbers are exceptional.

There was a point early in the year when he and Jon Gruden did get crossways over how many passes were coming his way, but Keyshawn said his protestations were, again, misconstrued. Self-confidence had been mistaken for selfishness.

"Look," he said, "I feel I can dominate all the time if I get the ball. That's just the way I feel. I'm always

frustrated. I'm never satisfied with what I've done. That's who I am."

Who he isn't constitutes one of the grand ironies of this Super Bowl. As a child of the mean streets of South Central Los Angeles, Johnson found a safe haven on the USC campus, and so only two teams on earth mattered to him -- the Trojans and the then-Los Angeles Raiders.

He would grow up to become a star at Southern Cal, but on the biggest day of his life, he'll find himself wanting to beat his once-beloved Silver and Black.

"It's strange that I'm here and they are, too," he said. "But lots of players get here and don't win. I desperately have to win this game."

A suggestion, Jon: Throw Keyshawn the damn ball. It's your best chance to make everyone except the Raiders happy.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:50AM

McClain's picks

America's Line

Tampa Bay (14-4) plus-3 1/2 vs. Oakland (13-5)

•**Last week:** 1-1 straight up, 1-1 against spread.

•**Season:** 162-103-1 straight up, 136-123-7 against spread.

McClain's pick

Bucs 23-20

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:22PM

Cowboys' likely offer one Smith will refuse

By **RICHARD JUSTICE**

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SAN DIEGO -- The 13-year marriage between Emmitt Smith and the Dallas Cowboys appears over.

The NFL's all-time leading rusher will be told next week that he must accept a huge pay cut and a demotion to the bench to return to the Cowboys for a 14th season. On Thursday, Smith indicated he's unwilling to accept a reduced role.

"I don't foresee myself being a backup," he said at a news conference featuring former Super Bowl Most Valuable Players. "With the right guys around me, I could still be a 1,300-yard back. I think I can still do a lot of damage."

He apparently won't get that chance with the Cowboys as new coach Bill Parcells attempts to revive a franchise that has gone 15-33 over the last three seasons.

Smith will turn 34 in May and is coming off a season in which he averaged just 3.8 yards per carry. Only in 1996, when he averaged 3.7 yards, has Smith done worse.

Smith said Thursday that with better personnel around him he still could be productive. But because the Cowboys have so many needs and salary-cap issues, they may not be able to afford him.

Smith will make a base salary of \$7 million in 2003 and count \$9.8 million against the salary cap.

Previously, Smith said he would consider taking a pay cut, but probably not to the 14-year veteran minimum of \$755,000. The Dallas Morning News reported that's the salary Smith will be offered when he meets with Cowboys owner Jerry Jones next week.

"If the Cowboys had released me a month ago, maybe I'd be here with the Bucs," Smith joked on Thursday, referring to the possibility Tampa Bay coach Jon Gruden would like to sign Smith if he's let go.

"I won't know anything until I sit down and meet with the Cowboys," Smith said. "If they don't want me back in Dallas, I'll weigh my options. Until that happens, I'm not even going to think about it. Dallas is my home, and I'm committed to the Cowboys."

Asked if he was disappointed his situation was still unsettled, Smith said: "You've got a new head coach making decisions on his staff. He's got to focus in on different things.

"They'll get to me when the time is right. I'm not going to force anything. A decision will be made. I've got a contract. I'm going to honor my contract as long as I can. If something else happens, I'll deal with it."

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:19AM

Bunion grinds Vick's Pro Bowl hopes to halt

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FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. -- Falcons quarterback Michael Vick will not play in the Pro Bowl next week because he needs to have a bunion removed.

Vick will miss the Feb. 2 game in Hawaii and remain in Atlanta to have a podiatrist take the bunion off his foot, team spokesman Aaron Salkin said Thursday.

Vick joined Dan Marino, Brett Favre, Kurt Warner, Daunte Culpepper and Tom Brady as the only second-year quarterbacks to make the Pro Bowl in their first full season as a starter.

In his first season as a starter, Vick led the Falcons to a 10-7-1 record. Atlanta advanced to the playoffs for the first time in four years, becoming the only visiting team to win a postseason game at Green Bay. They lost to Philadelphia the following week.

Vick rushed for 777 yards, the third-best single-season by a quarterback in NFL history. He completed 54.9 percent of 421 passes for 2,936 yards. He threw for 16 touchdowns and eight interceptions.

Tampa Bay quarterback Brad Johnson will replace Vick.

Separately, Chiefs running back Priest Holmes will skip the Pro Bowl because of a hip injury that caused him to miss the last two games of the season.

Johnson stays with Eagles

-- Philadelphia Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Johnson signed a four-year contract extension worth more than \$4 million, making him the highest-paid coordinator in the NFL.

Johnson, 61, withdrew from consideration for the San Francisco 49ers' head coaching position on Wednesday.

Hall remains with Chiefs

-- Kansas City kick returner Dante Hall, who was selected to his first Pro Bowl this season, signed a five-year contract.

Hall, formerly of Texas A&M, set team records this season with 57 kickoff returns for 1,354 yards and scored one touchdown. He also averaged 13.4 yards on 29 punt returns with two touchdowns.

Jaguars hire Harris

-- The Jacksonville Jaguars filled out their front office by hiring James Harris as their vice president of player personnel. Harris had been the Baltimore Ravens' director of pro personnel since 1997.

Harris, 55, played quarterback for the Bills, Rams and Chargers over a 12-year career.

Goodrich's car examined

-- Investigators in Dallas collected blood and hair samples from a car owned by Cowboys defensive back Dwayne Goodrich, who is accused in a hit-and-run accident that killed two good Samaritans on Interstate 35.

Court records show investigators collected samples from a point of impact in the center of the windshield of the backup cornerback's car.

Kearse mulls options

-- Titans defensive end Jevon Kearse will visit with several specialists during the next week and might have another operation on his left foot.

Kearse broke the fifth metatarsal in his left foot in the season opener. He returned for the final three games of the season, but was hampered by pain in the foot. Tests showed the foot healed properly.

Duffner hired in Green Bay

-- The Packers hired former Bengals defensive coordinator and Maryland coach Mark Duffner as linebackers coach.

Duffner, a 28-year coaching veteran, replaces Bo Pelini, who resigned this month to serve as the University of Nebraska's defensive coordinator.

Colts sign backup for Manning

-- Jim Druckenmiller, a former first-round draft pick, signed as a free agent with the Colts and may back up Peyton Mannig.

Druckenmiller was the 26th overall pick by San Francisco in the 1997 draft. His only start was in place of injured Steve Young in a 15-12 victory at St. Louis on Sept. 7, 1997, and he played in three other games as a backup that season.

Bengals hire assistant

-- The Bengals hired Oklahoma assistant and former NFL player Jonathan Hayes as tight ends coach.

Jan. 23, 2003, 10:04PM

Overdose of Gruden won't alter outcome

By LEIGH MONTVILLE
Special to the Chronicle

Woke up this morning. Had a large bowl of Gruden for breakfast. Added milk and sugar. Sprinkled strawberries on the top. Stuff still tasted like straw, but is supposed to be good for regularity.

(Sorry. This happens every year as the Super Bowl approaches. One name is crammed into your medulla oblongata for an entire week and will not leave.)

Turned on the stereo. It's a Gruden, of course. High end. Listened to my favorite heavy metal group, Gruden. Played my favorite video game, evading the dangerous packs of flying Gruden on the way to the castle.

(The one name is repeated so often on television and in the papers, you begin to see it everywhere. You cannot help yourself.)

Know a man who fractured his Gruden. Know another man who had his Gruden surgically removed. See that constellation? It's called Gruden. See how the stars make the outline of a frowning blond-headed boy.

(Luckily, come Sunday night the overkill mostly will be killed. The prominent name from this Super Bowl year will vanish from the news and from the mind. Everything will return to normal. Well, almost normal. There always is a slight residual effect.)

So the hours and minutes are ticking away on that old Gruden timepiece on the wall. Everyone's shaking in his laced-up Grudens as the big game approaches. The referee is flipping that Super Bowl XXXVII specially minted Gruden gold coin. Nerves are twanging everywhere. Ready to go.

No one wants to fall on his Martz.

Anyway, the Super Bowl pick.

Tampa Bay (plus-3 1/2) vs. Oakland

-- I have decided to pick everything for the Super Bowl. I pick warm and sunny for game time, an over-

under temperature of 62. I pick the over. I pick the wind direction from the southwest. The Raiders will win the toss and elect to receive. The first pass will be completed by Rich Gannon to Jerry Porter. The first run of 10 yards or longer will be by Charlie Garner. I pick Frank Middleton and Warren Sapp to have the first fight. I pick Middleton to win the fight. I pick Sapp to be more upset. I pick someone named Johnson to make the big mistake for the Bucs. I pick Rob Johnson, off the bench to replace injured Brad Johnson, as the man. Might be an intercepted pass meant for Keyshawn Johnson. Or Magic Johnson. Or Howard Johnson. I pick Carlos Santana in the Super Bowl sing-off. The Dixie Chicks second. I pick Tiki Barber to come off the bench if Ronde Barber is injured. Then, again, who would know? I pick Martin Gramatica over Sebastian Janikowski. I pick Al Davis over the Glazer family. I pick Jerry Rice over anyone who ever played football. Simple as that. I pick Bill Romanowski over himself. No, change that. I pick himself over Romanowski. He won't be able to control himself in this one. I pick the offense of the Raiders over the solid Tampa defense. I pick the Oakland defense over a shaky Tampa offense. I pick Pepsi to win the commercial sweepstakes. I pick controversy over lack of controversy. (Let me see. There is a man in a striped shirt, looking into a viewfinder.) I pick the line of scrimmage over Mike Alstott. I pick Jon Ritchie to surprise the world and run with the football one time. I pick Bill Callahan over Jon Gruden. I pick Gannon as the MVP. I pick a rout over a close game. I pick the over. I pick ...

Pick: Raiders.

Last week:

Finished 1-1 against the spread. Picked Raiders, but did not pick Bucs. This puts the season record at an astonishing 130-130-6. What are the statistical chances of doing that? Take away the accursed vigorish and I am at a standstill with the MIT graduates employed by the large casinos of the land. One game remains and one of us can say "yeah, I was over .500 for the year." The other has to walk away in tears, banished to a wilderness of handicapping basketball, football and baseball until the first week in September. Winner or loser. One game determines where you stand for all time.

I guess that's why they call it the Super Bowl.

Leigh Montville is a freelance writer based in Swampscott, Mass.

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:35AM

Local connection

TIM BROWN

•Position

-- Raiders wide receiver.

•Height/weight

-- 6-0; 195.

•Experience

-- 15th year.

•At a glance

-- Brown was a standout running back at Woodrow Wilson High School in Dallas before going to Notre Dame, where he became a Heisman Trophy winner. Spending his entire career with the Raiders, Brown has become one of the top receivers in NFL history and a lock for the Pro Football Hall of Fame when he retires.

•On Sunday

-- Brown has been waiting 15 years for this opportunity, and he is determined to make it a memorable day. Expect Brown to work the middle of the Bucs' secondary, and if the Tampa Bay defensive backs don't do a good job of tackling, Brown will pile up yards after the catch.

-- **CARLTON THOMPSON**

Jan. 24, 2003, 12:54AM

Summary

Under pressure

Ever since the Giants had monumental collapses with long-snapping and holding in San Francisco, the men who perform those duties have been under great scrutiny.

The days of no one noticing the holder and snapper apparently are gone.

"It's good when people overlook it (the role of a holder), because that means nothing has gone wrong," said Raiders punter **Shane Lechler**, also the team's holder. "The only time your name is going to get called out is when you drop the ball or something like that. As long as my name is not in the paper as being the holder, it's all right."

Ahoy, captains

Say what you will about the Glazer family that runs the Buccaneers, but there's no disputing its impact on the team that's playing in Super Bowl XXXVII.

Owner **Malcolm Glazer** lets his sons -- **Joel, Bryan** and **Ed** -- run the franchise. Joel and Bryan Glazer fired coach **Tony Dungy** and hired coach **Jon Gruden**. When they failed to get **Bill Parcells** or **Steve Mariucci**, they traded two No. 1 draft choices, two No. 2 picks and \$8 million to the Raiders for Gruden.

"I think what he's done this year is nothing short of incredible," Joel Glazer said. "A first-year coach, coming into an organization that had somewhat of a structure and staff in place, to fit right in and earn everyone's respect and lead them to a Super Bowl is nearly impossible. But he has done it because he is truly one in a million."

The Glazers seldom grant interviews. Until Thursday, they hadn't given any interviews since Gruden was hired.

"I'm extremely proud of everything the team has accomplished this season," Joel Glazer said. "Week in and week out, there was a demon that was out there, and we were able to put it in the ground."

Not his year

Patriots quarterback **Tom Brady** and other former MVPs were pitching Cadillacs on Thursday. The car

maker sponsors the Super Bowl MVP Award.

If the day should have been uncomfortable for anyone, it should have been for Brady, who went from being the MVP of last year's Super Bowl to the quarterback of a team that didn't make the playoffs.

"When you watch other teams move on, that's hard to take," he said. "This year was very disappointing. You want to be here. You want everyone talking about you and how good you are. As good as **Brad Johnson** and **Rich Gannon** are, I don't want to hear it. It goes to show you how difficult it is get to this game."

Respecting elders

Oakland receiver **Jerry Rice** has all but said he plans to return in 2003, but 15-year veteran **Tim Brown** has been somewhat evasive about his plans.

Regardless, the baby of the bunch -- **Jerry Porter** -- said opposing teams are in trouble if the Raiders' trio returns.

"It's going to be hell for every team," said Porter, 24.

Beyond the field

The father of Raiders fullback **Jon Ritchie** was stationed at a San Diego naval base in 1961. Four decades later, military personnel there are preparing for war.

"I have a cousin who is kind of on the cusp of whether he is going to head over to the Middle East, but I don't know what the situation is since I've been here," Ritchie said. "He's in the Army, but it's sad that I don't know what's going on right now as far as our military situation because I haven't left the hotel except to go to practice."

Odds and ends

Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego was voted only the 19th-best playing field in a survey by the players' union. Reliant Stadium in Houston ranked seventh. Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay led the pack. Players were also asked to name the worst stadiums, and a venue now closed to football -- Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia -- topped that list. ...

Referee **Bill Carollo** (No. 63) will lead the seven-man crew selected to officiate at Sunday's Super Bowl. The rest of the officiating crew: **Ed Coukart**, umpire, No. 71; **Dale Williams**, head linesman, No. 8; **Mark Steinkerchner**, line judge, No. 84; **Tom Sifferman**, field judge, No. 118; **Rick Patterson**, side judge, No. 15; and **Don Carey**, back judge, No. 126. ...

Tampa Bay running back **Michael Pittman** isn't surprised the NFL's top rushers -- **Ricky Williams**, **Priest Holmes** and **LaDainian Tomlinson** -- didn't make the playoffs. "A lot of backs are catching a lot of balls and running less," he said. ...

Raiders receiver **Tim Brown** is preparing for the biggest game of his life, and his wife is preparing to deliver twins. The babies could be born any day now. "Regarding Sunday, she has told me, 'Don't even think about it' and to just come (home) after the game Sunday night. If it happens Sunday, the plan would be for me to stay and play the game," Brown said. ...

Bucs outside linebacker **Derrick Brooks** will probably cover Raiders running back **Charlie Garner**, an excellent receiver, on pass routes. "We've got to be aware of him at all times, and we've got to stay with him all over the field," Brooks said.

-- **RICHARD JUSTICE**,

JOHN MCCLAIN

and **CARLTON THOMPSON**

Injury report

Oakland: Out -- TE Marcus Williams (ankle). Questionable -- LB Eric Barton (leg); C Barret Robbins (foot); CB Charles Woodson (leg). Probable -- CB Tory James (leg); S Rod Woodson (wrist).

Tampa Bay: Probable -- G Cosey Coleman (knee); DT Chartric Darby (calf); WR Joe Jurevicius (knee); LB Nate Webster (ankle); WR Karl Williams (thigh); DE Ellis Wymms (ankle).

Jan. 18, 2003, 11:34PM

Cowher has key personnel moves ahead

By JOHN MCCLAIN

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After their come-from-behind victory over Cleveland in the wild-card round and three-point overtime loss at Tennessee in the divisional round, the Pittsburgh Steelers are facing a busy offseason.

Quarterback Kordell Stewart will be waived. Running back Jerome Bettis may have played his last game in black and gold.

"I'm not going to discuss anything in regards to that," coach Bill Cowher said about Stewart and Bettis. "It's not fair to do that. There are two high-profile players in Jerome Bettis and Kordell Stewart. There are a lot of questions that people have in regard to not just whether they come back, but the roles they will play.

"Those are things that you have to sit down and look at the roster and look at the cap. We'll see what our options are."

Bettis, 30, rushed for 666 yards -- the second-least productive season of his 10-year career. Amos Zereoue is the starting running back.

"I still think I have some football left in me," said Bettis, who is scheduled to undergo knee surgery this month. "My whole career I've had to prove myself, so I don't see this year being any different."

Cowher, who ripped the officials after the loss to the Titans, wasn't fined by the league. He apologized publicly after they returned to Pittsburgh for charging after referee Ron Blum after the game.

"I was very much wrong in charging the official at the end of the game," he said. "I don't think I looked as fast as Joe Paterno did when he was chasing the guy down. I didn't have as far to go, though. Whenever I saw Joe, I thought to myself, 'Why, Joe? Why would you do that?' And then I just did that."

In 11 seasons as Steelers coach, Cowher has taken them to the playoffs eight times. Although they lost in the second round this season, the Steelers and Cowher have lost in three of four AFC title games in Pittsburgh.

Around the league

Fan friendly

The Texans joined the Green Bay Packers and Pittsburgh Steelers as the NFL leaders in fan satisfaction in the first J.D. Power and Associates major-market sports report. The findings are based on surveys of more than 13,500 fans who attended sporting events last year.

The survey analyzed the fan experience based on 16 attributes, including food, drinks, obtaining tickets and behavior of fans at the events. Despite the team's 4-12 record, fans gave the Texans and Reliant Stadium high marks.

Looking back

-- When **Charley Casserly** was Washington's general manager, he traded for quarterbacks **Rich Gannon** and **Brad Johnson**, who start for Oakland and Tampa Bay today.

In August 1993, Casserly sent a fifth-round pick to Minnesota for Gannon. Because of **Mark Rypien's** injury and **Cary Conklin's** ineffectiveness, Gannon started four games and played in eight. He threw three touchdown passes and seven interceptions and had a passer rating of 59.5.

"He was young and raw, but he had a good arm and was a great athlete," Casserly said. "He was very mobile. We thought he might be able to play, but, obviously, we didn't know he'd turn out like he has."

Gannon suffered a partially torn rotator cuff and underwent surgery in the offseason and sat out the 1994 season before signing with Kansas City.

In 1999, Casserly traded picks in the first, second and third rounds to Minnesota for Johnson. He threw for 4,005 yards, 24 touchdowns and 13 interceptions and led the Redskins to the divisional round of the playoffs, where they lost to Tampa Bay.

Johnson lasted in Washington one more season. Owner **Daniel Snyder** fell in love with **Jeff George**, which allowed Johnson to sign with the Buccaneers.

"Brad had played very well in Minnesota, but he got hurt and **Randall Cunningham** really came on that season (15-1 in 1998)," Casserly said. "Brad had great size and a good arm, and he made good decisions. He still does."

"I'm happy for both of those guys. They came up the hard way, experienced some tough times, and they've had a lot of success. Both are very deserving of that success."

A monstrosity

-- Talking about the Buccaneers' chance to defeat Philadelphia and advance to their first Super Bowl, defensive tackle **Warren Sapp** knows they must have a superior performance from offense, defense and special teams.

"When we get the three-headed monster going, he's tough to slay," Sapp said.

About being the underdog, Sapp looked at a crowd of reporters and said: "You think we're going to get beat. That's OK because none of you matter."

Sweet memories

-- Tampa Bay coach **Jon Gruden** has an interesting opinion on Veterans Stadium. He spent three seasons as Philadelphia's offensive coordinator before Oakland hired him as its head coach.

"It's like a national landmark," Gruden said. "It's a special place to play because it's so rich in tradition. The Vet helped me get where I am today."

Thanks for bad memories

-- Because today's game will be the last football game at Veterans Stadium, the Eagles were asked all week what their feelings are about such a historic event.

"I won't miss it," cornerback **Troy Vincent** said.

"I agree with Troy," running back **Duce Staley** said.

Free safety **Brian Dawkins** put a different spin on The Vet.

"I'll miss the atmosphere," Dawkins said. "This is the only stadium I've called home. Opposing teams worry about the crowd, the turf and the weather before they even consider us. Because there are so many things to think about, it can be a distraction."

No. 1 priority

-- The Bears have the fourth pick in the draft. Historically, they haven't spent a lot of first-round picks on quarterbacks. But general manager **Jerry Angelo** was the personnel director at Tampa Bay when **Trent Dilfer** was the No. 1 pick in 1994.

Angelo doesn't have confidence in any of the quarterbacks who were on the roster last season -- **Chris Chandler**, **Jim Miller** and **Henry Burris**. Chandler and Miller were injured. Burris is unproven.

"We're not counting on any of our quarterbacks for the '03 season," Angelo said. "They've all had major durability concerns, and we'd be foolish to think we can count on them for the '03 season."

Angelo could trade up with Cincinnati and get the top pick to draft USC quarterback **Carson Palmer**. Or he could sit tight and hope no one trades up with Detroit or the Texans to get Marshall quarterback **Byron Leftwich**.

Getting defensive

-- Defensive coordinator **Ray Rhodes** resigned from the Broncos and would like to be reunited with **Mike Holmgren** in Seattle. Holmgren fired **Steve Sidwell** in a defensive housecleaning after the season.

Denver coach **Mike Shanahan** would love to hire **Bob Slowick**, Green Bay's defensive coordinator. But there is no reason Sherman should let Slowick out of his contract with the Packers. Slowick, who never had been a defensive coordinator until Sherman hired him, is regarded as one of the best in the business.

Impressive numbers

-- Tampa Bay quarterback **Brad Johnson** has been in the playoffs in nine of his 11 seasons with the Vikings, Redskins and Buccaneers, even though he sat on the bench much of the time. ... The Raiders had fewer three-and-out series than any team in the league. ... Eagles cornerback **Troy Vincent** on today's game: "Offense isn't going to win this game. The defense that plays the best is going to win." ... Buccaneers defensive end **Simeon Rice**, who played his entire career with Arizona until coming to Tampa Bay in 2001, can't believe his good fortune. "This is the deepest I've been in the playoffs," he said. "When I was with the Cardinals, I used to dream about getting this kind of chance to play in the Super Bowl." ... ESPN's **Ron Jaworski**, who led the Eagles to Super Bowl XV against the Raiders, said about Veterans Stadium: "The field is so much better than it used to be. It used to be concrete with a table cloth on it."

Tied at the top

-- Since the start of the 2000 season, Tampa Bay's **Jon Gruden** and Philadelphia's **Andy Reid** are tied for the league's best record at 34-14. ... Since 1996, the Bucs are 40-18 in November and December. ... The Bucs had four shutouts in their first 26 seasons and two this season at Baltimore (25-0) and Chicago (15-0). They had one road shutout coming into this season. ... Tampa Bay set team records with 12 regular-season wins and six victories on the road. ... The Bucs are 0-6 in playoff games on the road. ... The Bucs are the only team to make the playoffs the last four years. Tampa Bay and Miami are the only teams to make the playoffs in five of the last six years.

John McClain covers the NFL for the Chronicle. His NFL Notebook appears Sundays.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:23PM

River Oaks sets McEnroe exhibition

By MEGAN MANFULL

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After 69 years, the River Oaks International Tennis Tournament is shaking up its routine and creating what is anticipated to be an unpredictable week.

Organizers are in the final stages of securing tennis' former bad boy John McEnroe as their main attraction in the tournament's first-ever exhibition match April 3. The event will be in the middle of the seven-day tournament, which starts March 31.

McEnroe will spend April 3 at River Oaks Country Club, conduct a book signing and then show his trademark intensity on the court when he faces American James Blake or Xavier Malisse of Belgium. River Oaks hopes McEnroe's involvement attracts a new and larger crowd.

"There's a lot of interest in seeing McEnroe, one of the greatest players to ever play," tournament director Van Barry said. "It's something that's different. We're trying to have a little something for every type of sports fan."

The intensity for which McEnroe, 43, was known has hardly abated since he retired from the game in 1992. While negotiating McEnroe's schedule at River Oaks, organizers learned the legend had no intention of carelessly coasting through the event. McEnroe made it clear his schedule had to be cleared for the two hours before the match.

"He's very concerned with how he plays," Barry said. "He wants to make sure he has time to eat right, rest and warm up."

During McEnroe's career, he won 77 singles titles and seven Grand Slam events. He also has been a part of the River Oaks tournament before. In 1997, he reached the semifinals before losing to Alex O'Brien.

The details are being finalized, but River Oaks is confident everything will be settled in the next few days. The decision puts an end to the club's search for the perfect drawing card for the exhibition match. Barry was also in discussions with Anna Kournikova and Boris Becker.

But McEnroe's schedule worked out best.

"Everybody has an opinion about him, but no one questions his ability," Barry said. "He leaves it all on the court."

Jan. 18, 2003, 5:27PM

College season getting serious

By MEGAN MANFULL

Copyright 2003 Houston Chronicle

The spring tennis season is only one day away, and Rice freshman Robert Searle is still unsure what to expect. In college, the fall schedule is a warmup. The spring is when it gets serious.

But if the fall is any indication of how the spring will play out, Searle can relax. His opponents, on the other hand, should be worried.

Searle, one of Rice's three tennis sensations from England, breezed through the fall schedule with 13 straight victories. His first collegiate loss didn't come until Nov. 7 in the ITA National Intercollegiate Indoor Championships. He fell to Illinois' Amer Delic, the nation's second-ranked player.

Unknown by many in the college scene only months ago, Searle's fall exploits garnered him plenty of attention. When the latest college rankings were released last week, Searle was No. 16 in singles. He is the highest-ranked freshman in the nation.

"He's a good one," Rice coach Ron Smarr said. "We'd just as soon have him as any freshman in the country we know of. We'd rather have him than almost any player. He's a nice kid and a good student. It's hard to get those."

Searle adds to an already strong Rice team led by seniors Richard and William Barker. The Barkers return as the nation's top-ranked doubles team after winning the program's first national indoor doubles title last fall.

The Rice team is ranked 36th and kicks off its regular season with a doubleheader against Nebraska and New Orleans at The Met on Monday.

"To have three guys ranked really helps give our team confidence," Smarr said. "We have the most depth we've had in the six years I've been here."

With a solid lineup from top to bottom in singles, the biggest question will be how Rice's talent meshes in doubles. Injuries have hampered the team in the past, forcing constant fluctuation among partners from week to week.

But with a healthy lineup heading into Monday's matches, the players are hopeful partners can be matched early and stick together for the rest of the season.

"Apart from the twins at the top there, the rest of us are pretty unsure of the doubles combinations we'll play with," Searle said. "On the singles court, I can take care of myself. But on the doubles court, I don't know who I'm going to play with. But the sooner that gets decided, the better everyone will be, I think."

After injuries contributed to a season-ending ranking of No. 51 in 2002, Smarr is hesitant to get too excited or have too lofty expectations for his team. He always tells his players to set one goal: Play your hardest each match, and the rest will play itself out.

It's hard for Smarr not to look at what is possible, however. Barring major injuries to his top three or four players, Smarr sees a Western Athletic Conference title within the team's reach. A national Top 25 ranking is feasible, too.

"Two years ago, we made a big jump and were ranked in the 30s," Smarr said. "And then last year was kind of a disappointment even though we beat some decent teams. "But I think we've made the progression to where we might be ranked 15 through 25 or better, which is our goal."

Baylor ranked No. 3

-- Baylor starts the regular season ranked No. 3 in men's tennis this year, topping a slew of nationally ranked teams in Texas. Texas is ranked No. 12, while Texas A&M is right behind at No. 13.

The top 40 also includes No. 30 SMU, No. 34 TCU and No. 36 Rice.

All six ranked teams are in Houston for the Downtown Club/Rice University Indoor Tennis Tournament at The Met. The finals are at 9 a.m. today. The event is an individual tournament that does not count toward the teams' or players' season records.

In women's tennis, only No. 13 Texas and No. 23 Texas A&M are ranked in the top 25.

Megan Manfull covers tennis for the Chronicle. Her notebook appears on Sundays.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:02PM

Bush aide quits because he just can't live on \$145,000

By SUSAN AGER

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Last month, while Republicans scrambled to prove they're not racists, a man named Nicholas Calio was able to quietly quit his White House job for a god-awful reason.

He was George Bush's liaison with Congress. He earned \$145,000 a year.

And he told reporters he had to quit because "I can't pay my bills."

Calio's announcement didn't get much attention.

What I've found out about Calio is that he's putting one child through college, getting ready to support a second college student and paying private school tuition for a third.

His wife does not work outside the home.

Their home is worth \$1.5 million.

Calio fancies monogrammed French-cuffed shirts, which I guess you can't buy on clearance at JC Penney.

He keeps about 1,000 bottles of wine in his cellar.

I learned that before he worked for taxpayers, he worked for himself, running a small lobbying firm. In the year 2000, he earned \$947,671.

I learned he will now return to lobbying, this time for Citigroup, a financial holding group that holds, oh, zillions and zillions of dollars.

One reporter asked Calio if selling his wine collection might have helped. Calio said no.

And Republicans thought Trent Lott was the only pimple on their image.

Look at 100 households in the United States and 95 of them survive on less money than Calio made at the White House.

This country's median household income is \$42,228 -- a hundred grand less than Calio's. Median means half of households earn more than that, but half earn less.

I'll repeat that: Half of American households survive on less than \$42,228 a year.

Do they suffer hunger pangs? Do they lie awake nights lusting for fine wine or cuffed shirts they can't afford? Would they sympathize with Calio because they, too, struggle to stay solvent?

The Census Bureau doesn't ask those questions, and we can't know the answers, but somehow they survive, although the wife might have to work for pay and the kids, too.

If we put together a campaign to end hunger in Africa, we might publish a poster that said "For Nick Calio's pitiful salary, we can feed more than 2,000 starving children for a year."

The value of a dollar is relative, which is why those of us with plenty would do well to be sensitive to those with too few.

A memory: I'm standing in a supermarket line with a fellow who cradles in each hand an avocado. "What a great day!" he says, grinning. "They're on sale, two for \$1.19!"

Normally they're 79 cents each. I do the math in my head: He's saving 39 cents, which equals joy.

I don't tell him I buy avocados every other day, indifferent to their price.

Likewise, most of us would know better than to whine to the world that we had to leave a job in public service because we couldn't afford an avocado every day, or dress shirts with cuffs, or wine from the reserve cellars of Niebaum-Coppola.

They don't call it public service for nothing.

Susan Ager is a lifestyle columnist for the Detroit Free Press.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:12PM

New Penn & Teller show will shock and surprise

By ANN HODGES

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Penn & Teller are the perfect performers for a show called *Bull*****. One of them says nothing, and the other says nothing printable.

Here, Penn & Teller are the hosts, co-executive producers and writers. They're best known for a Las Vegas magic and comedy act, although Showtime bills them as "confirmed skeptics and pro-science atheist." They call themselves "self-proclaimed pit bulls of truth." The show comes with a promise "to shock and surprise" by debunking sacred cows.

In actuality, *Penn & Teller: Bull****!* is a half-hour of obscenity-laced pontificating. Showtime says it "uses the duo's trademark humor, knowledge of carnival tricks and con-artistry, as well as hidden cameras and blatant confrontation."

Talk about con-artistry: Showtime actually bought 13 episodes. They start tonight at 10 with a torrent of trash talk aimed at psychics who claim to be communicating with the dead.

But first, Penn Jillette explains why his chosen attack mode is a nonstop barrage of obscene terms and four-letter words. "If someone calls someone liars and quacks, they can be sued," he says. By contrast, unprintables are safe, even "protection from litigious (bleeps)."

Penn's outrageous rants make Ozzy Osbourne sound saintly.

Teller eventually emerges, but don't ask me why. The only thing I recall about his "star turns" was a game of charades featuring one of the ultimate unprintables, after which his partner spat on him.

In another episode, Penn screams obscenities at chiropractic, reflexology and magnet therapy. Then, ambush cameras on, the production team tricks innocent mallgoers into playing their fools.

Later shows will swat alien abductions, global warming, bottled water, feng shui, near-death experiences, dieting and secondhand smoke.

I'd rather swat Penn & Teller.

Tonight, Penn elegantly dubs TV psychic John Edward "the biggest douche in the universe." The cameras spy on two top mediums; Penn's out to prove they're charlatans and tricksters. But Penn's pretty tricky, too. In fact, one medium is a plant -- a phony to show how easy it is to fool people. If you don't get the message, a couple of self-styled "investigators" are there to repeat it.

An emotional young man, who's convinced his dead mother has just sent him a message, sends Penn into a rip-'em-up tirade of unbleeped bleeps. Raising the cringe factor, Penn even calls up the memory of his own dead mother.

Penn's language is purely self-serving, of course, signifying nothing but the lazy way to go. Some people have had it with those tired, tired obscenities. Maybe Penn could give some new words a try?

But, bottom line, ask yourself this question: Even if he cleaned up his vocabulary, would you really want to listen to a half-hour of his bull****?

I don't.

Penn & Teller: Bull*!, 10 tonight on Showtime. Grade: D.***

Jan. 23, 2003, 6:02PM

Alley stages a remarkably human 'Goat'

By EVERETT EVANS

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The Goat or Who Is Sylvia? is as fine a piece of theatrical art as any Edward Albee has created -- and perhaps boldest of them all.

Original, provocative and engrossing, this hard-to-classify work demonstrates that, far from mellowing into complacency, Albee at 75 remains the "bad boy" of American theater, daring to challenge conventions of both stage and society. The fact that his craftsmanship and wit are sharper than ever makes for a heady brew of absurdity, bleak hilarity and cathartic woe.

Just one month after concluding its successful Broadway run, the 2002 Tony winner is making its regional bow in the Alley Theatre's incisive production.

Albee sets forth his premise deftly. Noted architect Martin is at the pinnacle of his success. In one week he has become the youngest person ever to win architecture's prestigious Pritzker Prize, has been commissioned to create the multibillion-dollar visionary project The World City and has celebrated his 50th birthday.

Martin shares a loving home life with wife Stevie and gay 17-year-old son Billy, whom both parents accept wholeheartedly.

So why is Martin troubled? As he prepares for an interview with longtime friend (and TV-talk host) Ross, the preoccupied Martin banters with Stevie, trying to mask distress with jests about midlife memory loss. Yet alone with his interviewer, Martin breaks down, the interview breaks off and (presumably off the record) Martin confides.



James Nielsen / Special to the Chronicle
Martin (Todd Waite, left) explains himself to his son, Billy (Matt Hune), in the Alley Theatre production of Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who Is Sylvia?*

He has fallen in love! The affair has gone on for six months. While hunting for a house in the country, he stopped on the crest of a hill and saw her "looking at me with those eyes." He hands Ross a picture of Sylvia, and Ross reacts in consternation. Sylvia is a goat.

In the next scene, Stevie has received a letter from best-friend-turned-snitch Ross. Both wife and son now know Martin's secret. This sets the stage for the play's central scene, the explosive confrontation between Stevie and Martin. She wants him to explain that which cannot be explained. In her frustration, she breaks things, turning their perfect living room into a visible manifestation of their shattered marriage.

Albee has chosen society's final taboo to test the limits of tolerance. He lures the audience in, encouraging us to chortle at Martin's preposterous predicament. Outrageous puns often rule. Oh, you kid!

Yet by midpoint, even though the humor keeps sneaking back in, we realize *The Goat* is dead serious. Martin's passion and bewilderment are real, as are Stevie's anguish and rage, and Billy's confusion.

Forget bestiality, the specific nature of Martin's "wrong."

Beneath its surface topic, *The Goat* percolates with universal issues, needling us with disturbing questions. What is love? What is attraction? How are the two different, and how are they related? What brings each, suddenly, into being? What is the value of pursuing your bliss when it destroys those who love you?

"How can you love *me* when you love *so much less*?" demands the wounded Stevie. Isn't this the cry of any betrayed lover?

The extreme situation exposes the ridiculousness of ordinary social standards and creates unusual reversals. Despite *his* transgression, the father still corrects his son's language: "Don't swear." And how often does a gay son criticize his successful heterosexual father: "You pervert!"

One of Albee's most compact and accessible plays, *The Goat* works on the level of pure storytelling. As in O. Henry or Guy de Maupassant, a swift, sure story line progresses to a sudden and shocking denouement.

The Goat brims with strong writing, as in Stevie's memorable speech in which she catalogs the inevitable horrors she was prepared to have life throw at her and her outrage at being hit with the one thing for which she was not prepared. It resonates with truth -- for doesn't life always hit us with the one thing we couldn't possibly have anticipated?

As in much of Albee's work, the characters' verbal tics can be maddening -- the correcting of each other's word choices, the repetition of questions improperly received. Yet Albee makes the device not only amusing but meaningful, suggesting that this web of miscommunication is the texture of human

existence.

Director Pam MacKinnon negotiates the shifting tone as expertly as Albee has written it. We feel this when Stevie takes command in her key scene, filling the stage with somber indignation. With crisp, almost clinical precision, the production moves from laughter to devastation.

Todd Waite rises to the challenges of Martin, making a potentially implausible figure pitiful, befuddled and (despite flashes of sheepishness in glance and demeanor) fully human. He convinces us that Martin is in the throes of some force he can neither comprehend nor control.

Elizabeth Heflin makes Stevie a tower of burning indignation -- a splendid follow-up to her very different betrayed spouse in last season's virtuosic *House and Garden*. Here, she begins as a brisk, capable, caring yet slightly chilly spouse, then bursts with pain, wrath and slashing wit.

James Belcher finds ironic humor in Ross, hilarious in his initial disbelief, his shock later solidifying into sneering self-righteousness.

Matt Hune makes a sensitive, vulnerable Billy, responding to family crisis with feelings that seem like fresh wounds.

Needless to say, *The Goat* is not for anyone easily offended -- though by staying away, they lose out on a challenging, enriching experience. If, however, you don't want to miss the most startling new American drama in at least a couple of seasons, make a date with *The Goat*.

The Goat or Who Is Sylvia?

When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays, 2:30 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Sundays, through Feb. 16

Where: Alley Theatre, Neuhaus Stage, 615 Texas

Tickets: \$40-\$45; 713-228-8421

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:07PM

Collectors line up for Hart Center's Appraisal Day

By **MADELEINE McDERMOTT HAMM**
Houston Chronicle Home Design Editor

SIBLEY Kopmeier looks puzzled as she slowly inspects the golden teddy bear with a floppy lace cap and shawl and eyeglasses perched just above its black button nose.

"It's hinged, a female bear and quite unusual, but toys are really not my field," the veteran Houston appraiser confesses. "Let's see if we can find someone who knows about this."

Carol Randlett, who bought the bear last year at a garage sale, follows Kopmeier from table to table, appraiser to appraiser. No one among the day's roster of appraisers, all volunteering their time, is a toy expert, but they agree the bear is certainly worth more than the \$20 paid by Randlett, an admitted garage sale junkie.

It's Appraisal Day at Hart Antique & Design Center, an event staged on the third Thursday of every other month, January through September. "You never know what will turn up," says Kirk Kilpatrick, center sales director, who seems to be everywhere making sure the four-hour event runs smoothly.

Attendees pay \$3 for each item to be appraised, with proceeds going to a different charity each time. On this cold January day the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is the designated charity, and several SPCA workers and pets-in-waiting are braving the chilly wind in a tent outside the center's entrance.

Before the doors open at 10 a.m., about 25 people are waiting in line carrying framed paintings, crowded cardboard boxes and mysterious objects wrapped in paper. Caryl Newsom says her box holds "things from my mom," and her friend Alice Jewell has brought items for an elderly friend -- all "old stuff," she adds.

Paintings and prints usually outnumber the other items hauled in for the appraisal events, Kilpatrick says. This day is no exception. By far the longest line forms for the art appraisal table manned by Jerry and Wynonne Hart, owners of Hart Galleries auction house.

A woman who looks like a Ralph Lauren ad in her checked wool jacket and dark slacks sits across from the Harts and pulls painting after painting from a Foley's shopping bag. "This is a very accomplished ink wash drawing of Lafayette. There are no initials, no signature," Jerry Hart says, as he slowly looks at the

front and back of a small framed work. He estimates its value as at least \$500.

The next piece the woman hands over causes a ripple of excitement. She says it is known to have been a wedding gift in 1938. "This is a small oil on canvas board attributed to Hubert Robert," Jerry Hart begins. Wynonne Hart quickly turns to listings for Robert in a large book. The artist lived from 1733 to 1808. Checking the work in hand against the listings in the book, they decide the painting could be worth between \$8,000 and \$12,000, possibly up to \$20,000.

Most of the artwork seen on Appraisal Day is not as fine as the pieces unceremoniously packed in the Foley's bag by the woman who preferred to remain nameless. In fact, a drawing one man hoped was a Picasso was just a decorative print.

Men and women continue to arrive throughout the four hours, each hoping to possess a treasure. Unlike the popular PBS series *Antiques Roadshow* -- which came to Houston June 4, 1998, and attracted thousands of appraisal seekers who waited in line for hours at the Astroarena -- this event proves reasonably quick, comfortable and easy-going.

Approximately 20 appraisers examine everything from pottery to textiles. Most are antiques dealers with special areas of expertise. Longtime dealers Frances Bones and Genevieve Belson zero in on one of the pieces Alice Jewell unwraps, a gold glass bowl with a boatlike shape.

Belson, who specializes in American glass and pottery and has a large shop in the Hart center, takes a closer look at the gold bowl with a magnifying glass. "This is the Button and Daisy pattern, made by Fenton in the 1930s. Under a black light, it will fluoresce better than Vaseline glass," she says. "It's worth about \$195, maybe \$225, but that's pushing it," she says. Jewell thinks her friend who owns the bowl will be pleased.

Stacks of reference books are handy on most tables for quick comparisons, and opinions flow freely. Several appraisers and attendees hover over the jewelry table as a ring is tested to determine if it's really a diamond. It tests positive, and everyone sighs in relief.

Roger Howard tells Joe Garrett his exquisite porcelain bowl was made by Picard and is worth \$750 to \$1,000. Garrett, who inherited the bowl from his mother, says it was one of his parents' wedding gifts. "My mother always told me not to put this in a garage sale," the happy owner says.

Appraiser David Newman gently works his fingers under the upholstered seat on an English dining chair and finds tiny holes in the frame. "I thought so -- this had a hand-tied cane seat at one time," he says. The couple have brought in an armchair and a sidechair from their set of eight dining chairs.

Newman is intrigued by the chairs' Queen Anne pad feet, Victorian turnings and slightly country version of a Chippendale ladderback. "It's interesting to see an English chair that combines different styles -- a little bit of this and a little bit of that, just like the Americans do today," he says.

Kilpatrick is surprised by how many people have brought furniture, some really large pieces. "Most people bring photographs of their furniture pieces. Some will have pictures from every angle and closeups of details," he says.

Mary Peterson brought pictures of the ornate, gilded curio cabinet she bought over the Internet on eBay. "I paid a lot for it, but they said it was a good buy," she says after her appraisal. Peterson also wanted advice about having a few places on the cabinet restored and was pleased with the suggestions she received.

By 2 p.m. approximately 370 items have been appraised. Two dogs have been adopted, but the cat goes back to the animal shelter.

The next Appraisal Day, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. March 20 at 3002 Fondren, will benefit Houston Hospice.

Jan. 23, 2003, 4:51PM

'Confessions' strikes tricky balance that works

[Go to showtimes](#)

By ERIC HARRISON

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Loony game-show creator and host Chuck Barris would be an odd subject for a movie if ... well, if he weren't so loony.

Barris created *The Dating Game* and *The Newlywed Game* in the 1970s -- shows that introduced the notion of real people performing on television without a script. Then he created *The Gong Show*, which more than one critic said heralded the decline of civilization.

Barris hosted *The Gong Show*, and a stranger host America had not seen. He was a grinning, bouncing bundle of energy whom you couldn't quite despise only because he seemed so imbecilic.

What America did not know was that Barris, in his spare time, was also a CIA assassin. Or so he said in his 1982 book, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*.

The movie, which features Sam Rockwell as Barris and George Clooney, Drew Barrymore and Julia Roberts in supporting roles, strikes a tricky balance. It deals with Barris' double life matter-of-factly. But though it has pathos and action as well as humor, it's just detached enough from reality that you can't accuse it of taking anything too seriously.

Clooney directed, but Steven Soderbergh is involved as executive producer. I wouldn't be surprised if Soderbergh gave his pal lots of assistance. It has the kind of fractured narrative, contrasting visual styles and self-reflexiveness that appeals to Soderbergh, but it's a lot more fun than the director's experimental works, such as *Full Frontal* or *Solaris*.

The most prominent behind-the-scenes presence is Charlie Kaufman. Kaufman, who wrote *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation*, is the most interesting writer working in Hollywood. With only four films he has established a style and vision so distinctive that one may speak of a Charlie Kaufman movie and have a listener know exactly what you mean, the way he would if you said the Coen brothers, Alfred Hitchcock or John Wayne.

Confessions has the same playfulness, self-awareness and surrealism of Kaufman's other movies, but it

also has crowd-pleasing elements -- guns, skullduggery, romance and an air of sweetness (whenever Barrymore is on-screen) -- that didn't grow naturally out of Kaufman's other films.

And, unlike *Adaptation*, which purports to be about the way Kaufman (as a character) was forced to impose his personality on the movie because he couldn't adapt a book any other way, the writer's style here meshes wonderfully with Barris' story and approach.

It's a perfect marriage, and if it doesn't exactly yield a perfect movie that's OK. The film, in keeping with its main character's mental state, is unruly; it's all over the place. Barris isn't the sort of character whose life and mind can yield the proverbial well-told tale. And if he were, Kaufman isn't the kind of writer who would attempt it.

The story, we're told in the beginning, is "based on private journals, public records and taped interviews." Some of those interviews, with people who knew Barris, such as Dick Clark, game-show host Jim Lange, Jaye P. Morgan and Gene Gene the Dancing Machine, are interspersed throughout the movie.

These aren't shot in ways that suggest a documentary, however. When Clark first appears, he's posed before a garish pink background with his face unrealistically lit. The movie is winking at us even as it pretends to be true.

The story is told mostly in flashback. We first see Barris holed up in a seedy motel, half out of his mind, living in filth, writing his autobiography, "trying to record my wasted life unflinchingly."

Barris' life, as presented here, has an amazing arc: As a young man, he's seen perpetually scamming for sex and being turned down by women repulsed by his crudeness. Then he meets Penny (Barrymore), a free spirit who becomes his longtime girlfriend.

As Barris begins to rise in show business, he realizes he's being tailed by a stranger (Clooney as CIA agent Jim Bryd) who eventually recruits him for the agency.

Suddenly, *The Dating Game* starts sending winning contestants to places like "romantic West Berlin" and "fabulous Helsinki" instead of Paris so Barris can go as chaperone to provide cover for his espionage missions. On the job, he's cool and debonair, the opposite of his real personality. Overseas, he meets Patricia (Roberts), with whom he has an affair.

Things eventually spiral out of control: The CIA has a mole. Agents are dying. No one can be trusted. Barris must go on the lam.

This is an impressive directorial debut by Clooney. Of course, he's helped by his friends (including Brad Pitt, Matt Damon and Jerry Weinstein in cameo roles) and a dynamite script. But this is an incredibly complex movie for a first effort.

It's occasionally laugh-out-loud funny, but it also has haunting images, and it achieves amazing emotional effects through its commingling of styles and moods.

Who would've thought a movie about Chuck Barris could be so rich and entertaining?

Grade: A

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:02PM

Broadway singer-actress Nell Carter dies

Associated Press

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. -- Nell Carter, who played the stout, sassy housekeeper on the 1980s sitcom *Gimme a Break!* and won a Tony Award in 1978 for her sultry turn in the Broadway musical *Ain't Misbehavin'*, died Thursday at 54.

The singer-actress collapsed in her Beverly Hills home and was found by one of her 13-year-old sons, spokesman Roger Lane said. The cause of death was not immediately known.

Carter had suffered from diabetes for years, Lane said, and she underwent two brain operations in 1992 to fix aneurysms. She recovered and continued to perform, mostly on stage.

At the time of her death, Carter was in rehearsals at a Long Beach theater for *Raisin*, a musical version of *Raisin in the Sun*.

Blessed with a big voice and strong stage presence despite her 4-foot-11 height, the heavysset Carter prided herself on her range as a performer, doing musicals and drama as well as comedy.

"She was a pioneer in many ways," said fellow Tony winner Audra McDonald. "She had the ability to be such an incredible comedic musical-theater actress, blow a song all the way to the back of the wall and then come down and be so intimate and beautiful in a ballad."

In addition to her Tony for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, Carter received an Emmy in 1982 for a TV broadcast of the show, which was a revue of Fats Waller songs. Her quietly soulful number *Mean to Me* was a show highlight.

Carter garnered two more Emmy nominations in 1982 and 1983 for *Gimme a Break!*, playing a housekeeper to a family headed by a widower who was the town police chief. The show ran from 1981 to 1987. In 1985, an episode was broadcast live -- the first for a situation comedy in nearly 30 years.

Carter was married and divorced twice. She is survived by her two sons and a daughter.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:41PM

Pearl Jam bringing tour to Houston

By **MICHAEL D. CLARK**

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Houston Pearl Jam fans who didn't get enough of the band following the release of 72 multidisc concert albums two years ago can see them in the flesh in April.

The band on Thursday announced a 48-date North American tour that includes a stop April 6 at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion.

According to Pearl Jam's Web site (www.pearljam.com), the tour will begin April 1 in Denver and end July 9 in New York City. The Woodlands date is slotted as the fourth date of the tour.

Guitarist Stone Gossard told Billboard.com that the shows will draw from the group's catalog of six past studio albums but will concentrate on its most recent release, *Riot Act*.

An on-sale date for tickets was not announced. Just as Pearl Jam did on its 2000 world tour, the band plans to record every show from the tour and release CDs as authorized "bootlegs."



Brett Coomer / Special to the Chronicle
Eddie Veder brings Pearl Jam back to Houston for a show in April.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:38PM

'American Idol' gives Fox shows an edge

By MIKE McDANIEL

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Lousy auditions are sweet music to Fox's ears.

On Wednesday, viewers convincingly showed its love for Fox's *American Idol*, giving the show almost twice the audience of ABC's *The Bachelorette* in a head-to-head battle of popular reality shows.

An audience of 24.8 million tuned in Fox's 90-minute episode, compared to 13.4 million for a 90-minute *The Bachelorette*. CBS' *Star Search* drew 13.7 million viewers, while ABC's *Celebrity Mole Hawaii* attracted 11.1 million.

Among scripted shows, a *Law & Order* rerun fared best with 16.6 million viewers, while a *West Wing* rerun drew 9.5 million viewers.

Fox, on the strength of *Idol* and *Joe Millionaire*, has won Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and would be well on its way to win the weekly ratings race were it not for the Super Bowl, which ABC airs on Sunday. Fox instead will likely finish a competitive No. 2.

"The best thing about this is we're increasing the circulation in viewership, allowing us to promote our scripted shows," said Scott Grogin, Fox's vice president for corporate communications (and a former Houstonian). "This should improve the performance of *24*, *That '70s Show* and *The Bernie Mac Show*. It can only benefit our entire schedule."

Indeed, Wednesday's *That '70s Show* (12.2 million viewers) beat the perennial winner of the 7 p.m. time slot, ABC's *My Wife & Kids* (11.3 million).

In Houston, *Idol* scored a 19.5 household rating and 26 share, outscoring *The Bachelorette* (13.4/18) and *Star Search* (8.3/12).

Court TV

You won't be surprised to learn that the trial of Friendswood dentist Clara Harris is receiving national media attention. In addition to the cable news channels, *Inside Edition* and the BBC are here, as well as numerous representatives from the print media.

Harris is charged with killing her husband by running him over with her luxury car after discovering him with his mistress.

On Thursday, News 24 Houston, Time Warner's local news channel, aired the opening statements from both sides. They were able to do so after Judge Carol Davies "was kind enough to let us have audio and video for the opening statements," said Jeff Alan, the channel's news director.

Previous to Tuesday's ruling, only video was permitted to go out.

News 24 aired the opening statements live and in their 50-minute entirety. Fox News Channel aired portions of the statements live.

"It was good, compelling television, and that's what we're here for," said Alan. "They showed the jury and us how they're going to present their cases."

News 24 plans to air the trial's closing arguments and verdict live, too.

Jan. 23, 2003, 11:33PM

FNC signs Pat Sajak to host talk program

Copyright 2003 New York Daily News

Wheel of Fortune host Pat Sajak is spinning to the Fox News Channel.

Sajak, best known for the long-running game show, will be the host of a weekend talk program on the top-rated cable news channel.

The hourlong *Pat Sajak Weekend* will include interviews with celebrities and newsmakers, according to Fox.

"I've always looked to him as a guy who has tremendous abilities as a broadcaster," said Kevin Magee, vice president of programming at FNC.

Sajak is no stranger to the talk format. In 1989, the former TV weatherman was hired as host of a CBS late-night show to go up against NBC's *Tonight*. It was canceled after just more than a year.

Jan. 23, 2003, 6:00PM

Uneven and amateurish 'Darkness Falls' flat

[Go to showtimes](#)

By **ERIC HARRISON**

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When Stan Winston, a multiple Oscar winner, was hired to design and create the ghoul in *Darkness Falls*, he must've been told this was to be a scary movie because he created a ghost that looks uncannily like the goofy "monster" in *Scary Movie*.

It's best to know this upfront. Nobody warned me. When I suddenly realized, midmovie, why the creature looked familiar, I laughed out loud.

That's not the reaction the filmmakers were striving for.

Darkness Falls has no well-known actors, a first-time director and an amateurish script. Producers almost certainly spent more money on the creature and the visual effects associated with it than anything else, which is probably why it's on-screen so much.

Monsters are scariest in small doses. This is particularly true when your monster calls to mind a Wayans brothers' spoof. The movie is pretty much unwatchable when the ghost isn't on-screen, though, so what's a filmmaker to do?

The movie starts with some narrated twaddle about an old lady whom everyone called Tooth Fairy because she gave away treats in exchange for children's baby teeth. You know right then: She's an odd bird. But townspeople didn't seem to mind until a couple of kids went missing. They strung her up. Her ghost has been haunting the town ever since.

The Tooth Fairy appears when kids lose their last baby teeth and kills them in the dark. You'd think the town would be constantly in turmoil, but the movie treats the slaying that occurs at the start of the movie as if it's the first one. Young Kyle survives, but the ghost kills his mom.

Flash forward 12 years: Kyle (Chaney Kley), who's spent much of his life in a mental hospital, returns to town to help the younger brother of his former girlfriend, Caitlin (Emma Caulfield of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). The Tooth Fairy is after the boy.

Kyle knows the monster can only strike in the dark. But for some reason -- or no reason -- it starts killing any and everyone it can.

Nothing about this makes sense, even by the standards of bad horror movies. No one behaves or talks the way real people do. No character makes an impression.

Through sudden loud noises and quick cutting, the movie succeeds at making you jump a time or two.

But, heck, pay me a few bucks, and I'll sneak up behind you and say boo.

Grade: D+

Jan. 23, 2003, 6:55PM

Gee's Bend quilts to launch tour

By MADELEINE McDERMOTT HAMM

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The Quilts of Gee's Bend, the exhibit that captured the hearts of art lovers in Houston and New York, is going on a three-year tour to eight major museums.

Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where it premiered in September 2002, the exhibit is at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York through March 9.

Originally there were no plans for a tour after the Whitney, but today MFAH is announcing plans for a tour that begins in June at the Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile, Ala. Later stops will include the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Va.; Memphis (Tenn.) Brooks Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and High Museum of Art in Atlanta, where the tour ends in February 2006.

The Quilts of Gee's Bend celebrates the artistic legacy of several generations of 20th-century quilters in the isolated, historically black community of Gee's Bend, Ala. Because of the women's innovative use of scrap and recycled materials and bold designs, New York Times art critic Michael Kimmelman called the quilts "some of the most miraculous works of modern art America has produced." Earlier this month *CBS Sunday Morning* broadcast a major segment on the exhibit.

The exhibit catalog, written by the curators, shows the quilts and 1930s photographs of Gee's Bend and tells the story of the community, the people and how they create their quilts. The catalog is \$39.95 in the MFAH shops.

Jan. 23, 2003, 7:12PM

On two

ONE LIST

Next week's Billboard magazine Top 10 R&B/Hip-Hop albums, according to a national sample of sales reports collected by SoundScan:

1. *I Care 4 U*, Aaliyah. Blackground. (Platinum)
2. *The Last Temptation*, Ja Rule. Murder Inc. (Platinum)
3. *Under Construction*, Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott. The Gold Mind. (Platinum)
4. *God's Son*, Nas. Ill Will. (Platinum)
5. *I Wanna Go There*, Tyrese. J.
6. *Better Dayz*, 2Pac. Amaru.
7. *This Is Me ... Then*, Jennifer Lopez. Epic. (Platinum)
8. *Soundtrack: 8 Mile*. Shady. (Platinum)
9. *Just Whitney ...*, Whitney Houston. Arista. (Platinum)
10. *The Blueprint 2: The Gift and the Curse*, Jay-Z. Roc-A-Fella. (Platinum)

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1848, James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget at Sutter's Mill in northern California, a discovery that led to the gold rush of '49.

In 1908, the first Boy Scout troop was organized in England by Robert Baden-Powell.

In 1989, confessed serial killer Theodore Bundy was put to death in Florida's electric chair.

In 2001, a House committee opened hearings into the collapse of energy giant Enron Corp.

IT'S FREE

DRAWING CLASS: Examine various stylistic approaches to still life and figurative drawing in "Drawing: The Basics," a free four-session class at the Bear Creek Community Center, 3 Abercrombie. The class is offered 9-11 a.m. Feb. 7, 14, 28 and March 7. Call 281-859-1566 to register and for supply list.

LIGHT THE CANDLES

TODAY: Actor Ernest Borgnine is 86. Evangelist Oral Roberts is 85. Actor Marvin Kaplan (*Top Cat*) is 76. Cajun musician Doug Kershaw is 67. Singer-songwriter Ray Stevens is 64. Singer-songwriter Neil Diamond is 62. Singer Aaron Neville is 62. Singer Warren Zevon is 56. Comedian Yakov Smirnoff is 52. Bandleader-musician Jools Holland is 45. Actress Nastassja Kinski is 43. Country musician Keech Rainwater (Lonestar) is 40. Comedian Phil LaMarr is 36. Olympic gold-medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton is 35. Rhythm-and-blues singer Pat "Sleepy" Brown (Society of Soul) is 33. Actress Merrilee McCommas is 32. Actress Tatyana Ali is 24.

SATURDAY: Journalist-author Edwin Newman is 84. Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze is 75. Actor Dean Jones is 72. The former president of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, is 70. Blues singer Etta James is 65. Movie director Tobe Hooper is 60. Actress Leigh Taylor-Young is 59. Actress Jenifer Lewis is 46. Actress Dinah Manoff is 45. Country musician Mike Burch (River Road) is 37. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kina is 34. Actress China Kantner is 32. Musician Matt Odmark (Jars of Clay) is 29. Rhythm-and-blues singer Alicia Keys is 22.

SUNDAY: Actress Anne Jeffreys is 80. Actor Paul Newman is 78. Actress Joan Leslie is 78. Cartoonist Jules Feiffer is 74. Sportscaster-actor Bob Uecker is 68. Actor Scott Glenn is 61. Singer Jean Knight is 60. Activist Angela Davis is 59. Actor David Strathairn is 54. Singer Lucinda Williams is 50. Rock singer-musician Eddie Van Halen is 46. Reggae musician Norman Hassan (UB40) is 45. Actress-comedian Ellen DeGeneres is 45. Hockey star Wayne Gretzky is 42. Musician Andrew Ridgeley is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jazzie B. (Soul II Soul) is 40. Gospel singer Kirk Franklin is 33. Actress Jennifer Crystal is 30. Country musician Michael Martin (Marshall Dyllon) is 20.

CALENDAR

AUTO SHOW: More than 650 vehicles will be on display at the 2003 Houston Auto Show, Saturday through Feb. 2 in Reliant Center. Tickets are \$8; children 12 and under are admitted free when accompanied by an adult.

JOKES ON US

Jennifer's wedding day was fast approaching, and everything was going smoothly. Her mother had even found the perfect dress to wear; it was stunning. A week later, Jennifer learn that her father's new, young trophy wife had purchased the exact same dress and refused to buy another.

Jennifer's mother told her not to be upset, that she would find another to wear to the wedding.

"What are you going to do with the first dress? You don't have any place to wear it," Jennifer said to her mother.

"Of course I do, dear. I'm wearing it to the rehearsal dinner."

-- Submitted by Susan Vavra,

Sugar Land

Send your joke to diane.cowen@chron.com or to Diane Stephen Cowen, Houston Chronicle Features Department, P.O. Box 4260, Houston, TX 77210.

MINIREVIEW

BOOKS: *Cultivating Delight: A Natural History of My Garden* by Diane Ackerman (Perennial/HarperCollins, \$13.95). In 52 lushly drawn but scientifically grounded sections, the author -- a poet by training -- follows her garden from spring through winter, ruminating on the stare of a cardinal or the prodigious oceanic journeys of the arctic tern. "Reading Ackerman's book reminds us that we too can make our paradise here and that tranquillity can be achieved by contemplating the petals of a rose," Miranda Seymour said last year in the New York Times.

-- New York Times News Service